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Being Smart at Work: Responsibility and Resistance in Precarious Australian Workplaces

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Abstract

Sociological evidence of deviant behaviours amongst insecure, un-unionised workers suggests that workers have the ability to challenge the organisational makeup of their workplaces. However, despite the prevalence of evidence, the focus on individual worker deviance has led many theorists to become concerned with the transformational and political potential of such behaviour. More specifically, concerns are raised as to whether deviance can affect a political struggle or whether it should be relegated to a more personal coping mechanism. If such deviance is relegated to personal, rather than political dimensions, the problem emerges whereby workers engage in a kind of 'decaf resistance' (Contu, 2008) whereby their behaviour only succeeds in reproducing the same conditions they are already subject to.

In order to evaluate this problem, this thesis explores the formation of responsibility amongst cohorts of workers. By analysing responsibility, this thesis examines the social and political factors that oblige and direct individual behaviour as well as situating these responses within a wider organisational praxis of insecure work. Key research questions in this thesis are: how do workers respond to insecurities at work, and how are these responses shared with colleagues? This investigation into the subject of responsibility allows deviant behaviours to be assessed as a socio-political product of work rather than as a personal response to work.

The empirical research was conducted across five large, centrally organised worksites in Brisbane, Australia. Cohorts of six workers from each worksite were interviewed privately and off-site. Cohorts were selected from each site according to their status as casual or non-permanent employees, who were subject to procedural management with hourly (quantifiable) key performance indicators (KPIs). Interview questions were organised around workers' daily responsibilities with a particular emphasis placed on obligations that deviated from managerial protocols.

Findings from the research show that conceptualisations of 'smart work' were shared across the cohorts of workers. The findings detail how worker strategies of 'cutting corners', 'gaming the numbers', and avoiding work were learnt behaviours that workers taught each other in the worksite. Moreover, the findings suggest that such practices of 'smart work' were not just sufficient but necessary to the wider functioning of the work environment; if workers were not 'smart' they were likely to be exploited by management.

I argue key themes from the findings reflect anarchistic predispositions towards mutual cooperation and self-organisation. Paramount to this discussion is the role of anarchistic responsibilities that favour strategies of direct action, decentralisation, and a non-hierarchical approach amongst the

workers interviewed. While it is clear that ‘smart work’ continues to reproduce the labour process, I argue that these results highlight an element of informal collectivity that is absent from previous investigations into deviance and misbehaviour. I argue that such collectivity and mutual self-organisation demonstrate a sociological and transformational aspect of worker deviance that can be linked to wider discussions of political resistance.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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Research Involving Human or Animal Subjects

Ethical approval for this project was granted through the School of Social Science Ethical Review Panel (SSERP) on November 3, 2014 under the approval number RHD8/2014. A copy of the approval letter is attached in Appendix 4.

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Keywords

sociology, work, anarchism, derrida, precarity, insecurity, deviance, misbehaviour, resistance, responsibility

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FoR code: 1608, Sociology, 80 per cent

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Abbreviations

ABC	**The Australian Broadcasting Company**
ABS	**The Australian Bureau of Statistics**
CPI	**Consumer Price Index**
GATT	**General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade**
GDP	**Gross Domestic Product**
HILDA	**The Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia**
IMF	**The International Monetary Fund**
IWA	**The International Workingmen's Association**
KPI	**Key Performance Indicators**
NAFTA	**The North American Free Trade Agreement**
NSFE	**Non-Standard Forms of Employment**
OECD	**The Organisation of Economically Cooperation and Development**
UBI	**Universal Basic Income**

Chapter 1: Why Do We Need Smart Work?

Stagnating wages, rising household debt, and diminishing rates of unionisation around the world suggest that workers are precariously positioned in society. The fundamental role of work in forming social identity, value, and meaning are under threat. Rising concerns about a global precarious workforce, and growing job insecurity have been central to many sociological, political, and economic analyses of the contemporary, and future workplace (Fleming, 2014; Lazzarato, 2014; Standing, 2011; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Beck, 2000; Sennett, 1998). Central to these theories of precarious work is the concern that local labour forces are precariously positioned against the global power of capital. More specifically, capital investments appear to mobilise around the globe with greater ease than workplaces that are tied to specific geographical places, state politics, and most importantly: people. Consequently the emerging problem of precarity is one in which workers fear that work will fail to provide economic, political, and social security now and into the future.

One common response to this inability of work to secure social experiences has been to secure the economic component of wage-labour through the implementation of a universal basic income (UBI). On the wider level of economic policy, figures such as the former Greek Minister of Finance, Yanis Varoufakis have called for the implementation of UBI as a means to help minimise the threat of unemployment, or underemployment, on workers. This economic policy serves to secure social conditions, Varoufakis argues, because it gives workers a "safety net" on which to fall back when bargaining for future contracts (Varoufakis, 2016). Nevertheless, the reality of any UBI schemes are likely far away. Standing (2017, pp. 112-113), for instance, points out that there are substantial political and economic issues to be tackled before any transition towards UBI can emerge, and that such issues involve "unravelling the complexity of the existing system which is the result of ad hoc tinkering over the past century or more". Elise Klein (2016, p. 8) also cautions that UBI "should not be interpreted as 'the' panacea" and advises that UBI needs to be part of sweeping socio-political and economic changes.

In lieu of monumental shifts in government policy, researchers have been investigating more pragmatic responses to contemporary work from the workers, themselves. Research into burnout, absenteeism, cynicism, time wasting, sabotage, stealing (and so on) has sparked an interest in deviance and misbehaviour and its ability to shape organisational behaviour. This interest in deviance and misbehaviour focuses on the more direct mechanisms through which workers seek to secure their own connection, standing, and identity at work (Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Korczynski, 2011; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Collinson, 2003; Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999). Such a focus on organisational *mis*behaviour (as opposed to organisational behaviour), Ackroyd and Thompson

(1999) argue, allows researchers to examine the collective forms of action and organisation that are already operating in workplaces around the world.

This approach to workplace deviance and misbehaviour, has illustrated the effects of deviant behaviour in shaping subjective experiences of work in contemporary times. Central to this research are numerous accounts of ambiguous, satirical, and often cynical performances in which workers challenge the identity and nature of work, as well as themselves as workers (see; Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005; McCabe, 2007; Korczynski, 2011). Despite this focus on employee deviance, many of these theorists share a concern that deviant practices, and behaviours, have become separated from social and political avenues (Collinson, 2003; McCabe, 2007; Contu, 2008; Paulsen, 2015). The practices and behaviours internalised by workers in this research have been commonly shown to reflect ironic, cynical, and often jovial figures who challenge aspects of work while still participating in the process of work. Theorists have shown concern that these workers enact a neoliberal form of "resistance" and are less able to challenge the problematic aspects of capitalist work than forms of collective resistance (McCabe, 2007; Contu, 2008; Korczynski, 2011). For instance, McCabe (2007, p. xii) argues that these neoliberal mechanisms of resistance are too individualised and "lead workers to reproduce the conditions against which they have suffered". In other words, while workers challenge the overarching organisation of their workplace, and deviate from certain protocols, they do so while internalising and reproducing the fundamental principles of the same problematic, precarious, capitalistic working relationship. Such an issue, McCabe points out, is not just a loss to the workers, but also the owners and operators of these industries where workers waste their "ingenuity" by using their "energy and creativity to find ways to cope with, and escape, the demands of the machine" (2007, p. xiii).

This thesis explores this relationship between deviant workers who try to resist the insecurities of their workplace. More specifically, this thesis aims to explore this neoliberal criticism of resistance in contemporary workplaces by examining workers' responsibilities in these insecure and precarious working environments. This focus on the subject of responsibility aims to highlight the role of obligation and duty that are performed and internalised by precarious workers. Such a focus on responsibility aims to contrast and illuminate the difference in bureaucratically imposed obligations and worker driven and/or collective obligations. This emphasis on responsibility allows my research to address the question of resistance from a sociological perspective as a process that arises through a collective and transformative response from workers to the demands of precarious work. Such an approach allows me to illustrate the necessary role of fellow workers in shaping subjectivity and creating the possibility for individual acts of deviance. Through this social focus I

challenge the neoliberal narrative of identity politics by illustrating the value and prevalence of meaningful, social interactions even in these precarious, anxious, and insecure spaces. Such interactions, I argue, suggest that social and political dimensions of struggle that can be referred to as 'resistance' are prominent in the deviant engagement of workers in these workplaces.

Two theoretical approaches are essential to the contribution this thesis makes to existing literature and research. First, I situate resistance as a process that emerges in response to, and hand-in-hand, with precarious work. This argument unfolds in Chapter Two where I illustrate how the transformation of work since the industrial period has institutionalised work as a social activity. While I agree that much has changed in recent (neoliberal) transformations of work, I argue that the central role that work serves as a social intuition has not changed for workers who still rely on work to form identity, value, and of course pay the bills. This is important because the problem of social insecurity has traditionally been filled by the institution of work, so as work (as an institution) fails to meet the basic social needs of its workers, then workers are faced with growing isolation, exclusion, and segregation from society. Second, I conceptualise resistance as a form of responsibility in Chapter Three. Here I introduce a Postanarchist reading of resistance that views centralised power as something that is inherently problematic. This interpretation suggests that workers share in, and create the ability-to-respond (i.e. responsibility) to various forms of power as they redistribute and delegitimise these mechanisms through struggles at work. These struggles, I demonstrate, arise from a social engagement between workers that is inherently tied to knowledge, work culture, and mutual benefit. Both these methodological principles are central to the collection of data, and the presentation of findings and discussion of this thesis as I explore the role of work, insecurity, and resistance in the 21st century.

Precarious Work and the Rationale for Research

Precarious work can be explained simply as "employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker" (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 2)". Precarious work, and job insecurity are often used synonymously with the idea of 'job tenure insecurity' which refers to a fear about the loss of employment. This conceptualisation, however, is problematic because it reduces the experience of employee precarity to the purely economic realm in which work pertains to the condition of getting — or staying in — a job. The issues that arise from this problematic conceptualisation of precarious work are twofold. First, Doogan (2009; 2015) points out that across many OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries job tenure is actually increasing and does not account for the experiences of precarity amongst workers. Secondly, as Gallie, Felstead, Green, and Inanc (2016) point out: anxieties about work are not limited to tenure, but also include the shifting nature of work. More specifically, Gallie et al. (2016)

argue that the social *status* of a job with respect to its ability to provide workers with various aspects of social security (i.e. class mobility, growing skillsets) needs to be included in the conceptualisation of precarious work. While both of these arguments will be explored in more depth in Chapter Two and Three, this conceptual difference is important to note here because it directs the focus of this research in the Australian workplace that will follow.

The threat of precarious work to workers has a significant impact on several aspects of life. Its effects on health, for instance, are well documented by De Witte, Pienaar, & De Cuyper (2016, p. 27) who argue that there is "considerable evidence for normal causation, from job insecurity to poorer health and well-being over time". These authors argue that these effects can be measured for "*both* health *and* well-being in the future" (De Witte, Pienaar, & De Cuyper, 2016, p. 27, emphasis in original) which adds an additional layer to existing research that focuses more specifically on psychological well-being in comparison to somatic health (Becher & Dollard, 2016). Through a meta-analysis of existing research De Witte et al. show that job insecurity has "cumulative effects on aspects of health and well-being when job insecurity continues" that increases the frequency of visits to a medical practitioner over a period of one year by at least four times (2016, p. 26). They also associate job insecurity with a variety of personal health risks like: increased rates of heart disease, blood pressure, respiratory problems, musco-skeletal issues, and sleep issues (De Witte et al. 2016, p. 26). Research from Australia also suggests that work related stress has been a major factor in more than half of the recorded suicides (Routley & Ozanne-Smith, 2012).

On a social level, vulnerable citizens are most likely to feel the effects of job insecurity. Data from the Housing, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA) show that Australian workers aged 55 or older are now twice as likely to leave their jobs in the first year in comparison to 1975 (Mccrindle, 2014). Research done by the Young Workers Research Project conducted in Victoria, shows that one in five workers aged 15-30 had worked unpaid trials to get a job (The Young Workers Centre, 2016). It also shows that one in five workers had also been paid less than the minimum wage, and that over 50 per cent of the workers had been involved in "off the clock violations" which includes working overtime, or coming in early for no pay (The Young Workers Centre, 2016). Finally, it found that 75 per cent of the workers were working unsociable hours (i.e. weekends, nights, or public holidays) but less than half of these workers were getting paid the legal entitlements for their hours they were working (The Young Workers Centre, 2016). This data suggests that young workers are being exploited by employers, and also pushing the legal boundaries of employment in order to get ahead of other applicants for the same role. It also found that workers have to work harder to keep up to speed with technological advances and shifts in the labour market.

While similar health and sociological effects of precarious work are evident across the globe, the Australian labour force offers a unique and advantageous environment in which to examine the shifting nature of work. Labour historians suggest that the geographic isolation of Australia from the rest of the world during industrialisation played a significant role in the development of a strong, and unified working class identity (Bashford & Macintyre, 2013; Macintyre, 2009; Bramble, 2008; Cross, 1996). At the time of writing, Australia boasts some of the most generous average hourly wages in the world (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2016), and when compared with local purchasing power, is situated in the higher tier of working conditions across the OECD (The Australian, 2014). Nevertheless, developments such as the announcement by Jeff Bezos — the CEO of Amazon — that Amazon will set up its first warehouse in Australia (Sydney Morning Herald, 2016) poses a significant risk to the stability of working conditions in Australia. This risk has been further amplified when in February 2018 Amazon patented a design for a wristband "that can precisely track where warehouse employees are placing their hands and use vibrations to nudge them in a different direction" (The Guardian, 2018). Such concerns about the invasive potential of this technology, and the likelihood of its use on the workforce is expressed in reports from previous Amazon employees in the U.S who claim that "Amazon is like every single bad job you've ever had – at once" because of the "strict deadlines", legally "low pay", and the "poor treatment of staff" (News Corp Australia, 2017). The threat of such a powerful, and unashamedly hostile employer arriving on Australian soil presents a problem for the security of workers in Australia who are already under threat of precarity and declining security. The threat here is not one of employment tenure, or unemployment as Doogan (2009) and Gallie et al. (2016) argue, but rather a socio-political issue with work security in that Australian workers are facing a decline in the status and experience of their work as multi-national corporations like Amazon are making their way to Australia.

Economic data illustrates the increasingly precarious position of the Australian workforce. Recent figures collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that trade union membership in Australia is down to 14.8 per cent as of 2016. These figures, as shown in figure 1 are the "lowest in the history of the series" (Bowden, 2017).

Figure 1: Trade Union Membership as a percentage of the Australian labour force (ABS, as cited in Bowden, 2017).

The steady decrease in trade union membership as shown in this graph suggests that workers, and their workplaces are less likely to be protected by unions and are thus more likely to be exploited by illegal, or quasi-legal activities from employers. Bramble suggests that while trade union membership is in steady decline, the role of trade unions is still vital to discussions with government bodies, and employer representatives (2008, p. 4). However, he also acknowledges that the decline of grassroots unionisation allowed "employers, backed by conservative state governments" to be "increasingly emboldened to challenge the unions" throughout the 1990s (Bramble, 2008, p. 4). Thus, while there is still hope for an increased union presence in future worker struggles, there is an undeniable protraction of precariously positioned workers who have fewer formal and legal avenues with which to challenge the authority of management.

The second indicator of this precarious and risky relationship between workers and work is shown by the deteriorating wage growth in Australia. The data shown in figure 2 demonstrates that the average growth rate of worker wages has been declining since June, 2009.

Figure 2: Wage growth in Australia since 1999 (Sydney Morning Herald, 2017).

The decline in Australian wages over time suggests that workers have less disposable income and are less able to maintain their standard of living over time as services and bills rise with annual inflation rates. Data from March 2017 confirms that while "Australia's quarterly GDP grew by $31.7 billion", "Less than one-tenth of that was reflected in higher compensation for Australian workers" (Stanford, 2017). This data suggests that worker wages grow at a slower rate to those who own businesses, and thus situates workers more precariously in Australian society. Figure 3 demonstrates the effects of this disproportionate share of wealth by contrasting employee wages to inflation rates. After allowing for inflation, figure 3 demonstrates that workers are actually getting paid less (in real terms) than previously.

Figure 3: Australian real wage growth after allowing for inflation (Sydney Morning Herald, 2017).

Figure 3 shows that once inflation rates are accounted for, wage growth in Australia has entered negative territory. This means that the value of a worker's wage is of less value today than it was yesterday. Without the ability to provide a competitive living wage, the ability of work to offer security for its workers is undermined and raises a substantial challenge for the social security and comfort of workers in the Australian labour force. This low — or negative — wage growth is an important signpost for the rising precarity experienced by workers who are getting less (economically) out of work than they once were.

The fourth sign that the Australian labour force is facing a problem is the disproportionate growth of productivity in comparison to wage growth. Figure 4 shows that while productivity outputs have increased by over 125 per cent in the previous 17 years, wage growth has risen by less than 115 per cent.

Figure 4: Comparison of wage growth (per cent) in comparison with productivity (per cent) over time (Sydney Morning Herald, 2017).

This disparity between the (steady) growth in productivity, and the (stagnating) growth of wages means workers are working harder for fewer economic returns. It shows that businesses are getting more out of their workers for less. This statistic supports the suggestion made by many theorists (see for instance Fleming, 2014; Lazzarato, 2011; Berardi, 2009) that the reward of working is less and less beneficial to workers. While the Australian worker does not (yet) have to face the threat of working-class poverty faced by those in the United States who work full-time and still live below the poverty lines (Torraco, 2016) the threat of this reliance on a system of work that offers less-and-less security to its employees is very real for the Australian worker.

The final snapshot that illustrates the precarious social reality of Australian workers demonstrated by the household debt to income comparison in figure 5.

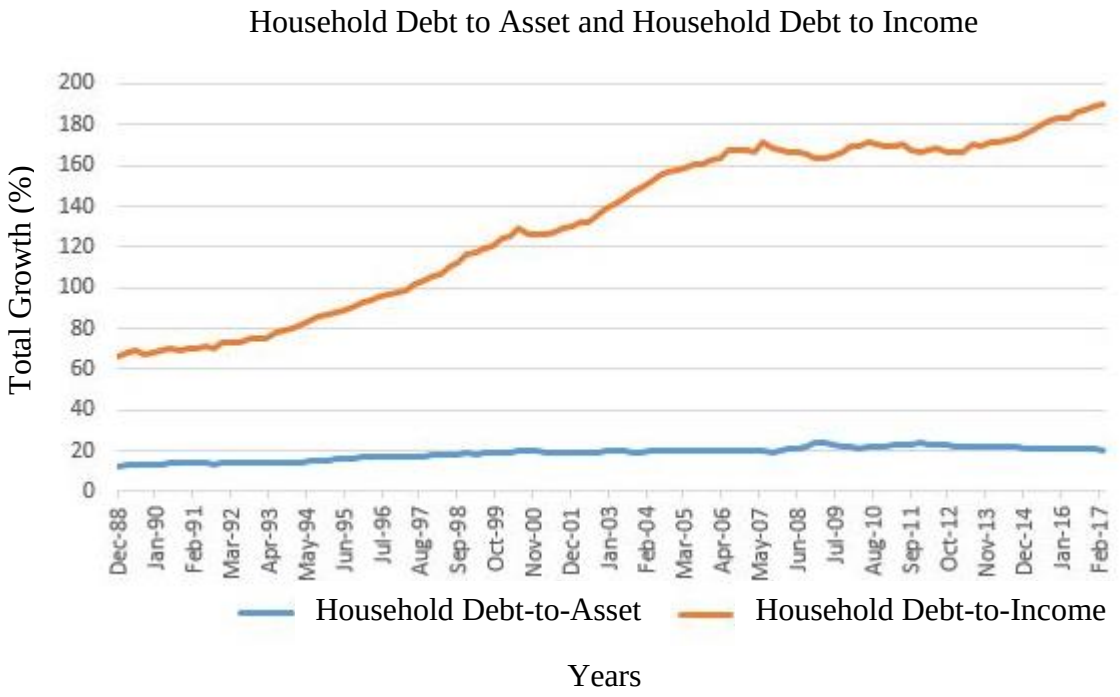

Figure 5: Annual household debt measured over years (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2017).

Figure 5 demonstrates that while household debt with regards to assets owned rose to 23.7 per cent of the average household wealth in 2008 it has since dropped to 20.5 per cent. Nevertheless, the percentage of debt in proportion to income for each household has risen steadily to 190.4 per cent in February 2017. While the ABC reports that the growing debt ratio needs to be considered in the context of Australia's generous household wealth, they argue that much of household wealth estimates rely on assumptions about value, whereas debt will remain constant regardless of market shares and economic instability (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2017). The implication is that if — or when — economic markets fluctuate, the value of Australian household assets may decline, while debt levels will remain stable.

This growing ratio of debt to income suggests that the individual Australian worker relies on a regular income, and conversely continuous employment now, more than ever. It reflects the ongoing nature of debt (see Graeber, 2011) and the importance of work in society. Most importantly this statistic shows that workers cannot afford to lose employment, or what is far more likely, lose *full-time* employment because without ongoing work and the income that accompanies it, the average Australian worker will fall further into debt. This statistic is compounded by earlier snapshots that show that real wages are in decline, and that productivity demands are increasing which help to paint the overall picture that work is becoming a precarious and risky social endeavour.

While these statistics show a largely economic analysis of the conditions faced by workers in Australia, they illustrate the precarious situation that workers face. More specifically, these five figures illustrate both the fundamental role that work plays in Australian life, and that this role offers fewer social benefits than before. They demonstrate that workers are paid less over time and are expected to be more productive, they show that the average Australian is subject to an ever increasing amount of debt and therefore reliance on a steady financial income, and they show that workers are less likely to have the political resources of a trade union to represent and help them through these struggles. This data thus confirms the precarious scenario in which workers find themselves by illuminating the central role of work for securing economic wealth, but also the deterioration of economic rewards for working. Herein I define my conceptualisation of job insecurity as something inherently tied to, but distinct from precarious work. I define precarious work as a structural factor in the destabilisation of work (i.e. non-permanent contracts, insufficient hours and wages, or unreasonable work outputs) and distinguish this from job insecurity in which I refer to the effect of this instability on the individual worker (i.e. lack of confidence in ability of work to secure a lifestyle, the deterioration of the status of working, decreasing trust in capitalist society).

Research Questions

The principal question this thesis asks is:

(1) *What are the mechanisms that allow workers to respond to, and organise themselves around the challenges of insecure and precarious work*?

This question follows Shukaitis' (2013) inquiry into whether the "changing composition of labour" can shape "modes of being and community" amongst workers, and whether forms of social interactions exist amongst these working relationships that are not "determined by labour" (2013, p. 658). My research responds to this question by investigating the responsibilities of workers in precarious workplaces. While much research exists that explores the manifestation and emergence of precarious and insecure work (see Bauman, 2001; Beck, 2000; Doogan, 2009; Standing, 2011) less is known about the manner in which workers use, respond to, and challenge elements of precarity. By exploring the cultivation and experience of responsibility my research investigates the structures that shape and create worker subjectivity in these workplaces.

An important aspect of this question of responsibility pertains to the nature of responsibility in these precarious workplaces. Namely:

(2) *How are workers involved in the production of responsibility?*

What is the role workers play in producing and reproducing responsibilities at work? Are workers involved in the production of responsibility, or are these forms of responsibility prescribed to workers from management and/or bureaucratic protocols? Furthermore, if responsibility can be located in the cultural domain of the workers, then this question extends to an inquiry of collective responsibilities. Specifically, whether responsibilities are relegated to individual interactions and practices, or are they are shaped by collective and social ideals in these workplaces? If the latter is the case, then responsibility offers a valuable mechanism for organising and transforming worker subjectivity from the precarious forces of work.

The transformational potential of workers in these precarious scenarios is a significant focus of this research. Subsequently, a key aspect to investigating the organisational responsibilities of precarious workers pertains to the investigation of their political potential to challenge and deviate from various work obligations. Herein I ask my third research question:

(3) *How do these responsibilities resist dominating forms of power, authority and hierarchy in the workplace?*

Are these responsibilities personal, or political? Do these deviant practices resist or reproduce hierarchies in the workplace? Paramount to this question is a focus on deviance and misbehaviour that has been raised by Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) investigation of organisational misbehaviour. Here my thesis extends Ackroyd and Thompson's analysis on misbehaviour to interrogate the political potential for misbehaving workers to challenge organisational practices at work as I explore the potential of workers to deviate from pre-determined work responsibilities. The apparent inability of 'misbehaving' workers to deviate from predetermined responsibilities at work (e.g. the labour process) has been the cause of much debate and criticism (see McCabe, 2007; Contu, 2008; Korczynski, 2011; Paulsen, 2015). Nevertheless, through the investigation of responsibility, my research endeavours to demonstrate the social and political responsibilities of workers as they continuously struggle against insecurity at work. By illustrating this struggle, my research highlights the transformative potential of workers as they deviate from pre-determined duties, obligations, and responsibilities in their day-to-day work routines.

The Theory

The aim of this research is to better understand the transformative potential of precarity and insecurity as they emerge more frequently on a global scale in workplaces of all industries. This research aims to investigate the social and political dimensions that are being reshaped in precarious workplaces. The central focus of responsibility draws from a Derridean conceptualisation of responsibility in which individual (liberal) subjectivity is deconstructed by examining its

obligations in the workplace. While this methodology will be fully detailed in Chapter Three, it serves as a fundamental theoretical tool to assess the relationship and subjectivity of workers to their workplace. By deconstructing the obligations that tie individual workers to the workplace I will illuminate various forms of responsibility that will help distinguish between more formal work-responsibilities, from more social-responsibilities. This differentiation will help highlight responsibilities that reproduce power, and those that contest, challenge, and/or deviate from capitalist and neoliberal power structures.

By utilising this poststructuralist method of deconstruction, my research seeks to analyse the transformational potential of insecure workers. This transformational potential is examined through the study of deviant responsibilities in which workers demonstrate a divergence from official, and pre-determined work responsibilities like key performance indicators, output quotas, and bureaucratic procedures. Herein I focus on the concept of 'deviance' rather than misbehaviour which has been common to the literature that has emerged from Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) study. Nevertheless, I understand the concept of deviance to be consistent with Ackroyd and Thompson's conceptualisation of misbehaviour which can be defined as "anything you do at work you are not supposed to do" (1999, p. 2).

In order to trace this political potential I follow Newman's work that draws connections between continental philosophy and the radical political theory of Anarchism (see Newman 2001, 2010, 2016). Anarchist theory can be defined as a political theory of organisation that attempts to create a society that is free from hierarchy and domination (Brincat, 2013; Gordon, 2007; Ward, 1996; Kropotkin, 1910; Proudhon, 1970). Kropotkin — one of the founders of Anarchism — defines Anarchism as:

> …a name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government — harmony in such a society being obtained, not by the submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilised being. (Kropotkin, 1910)

More recently theorists have adapted Anarchist theory around poststructuralist conceptualisations of power in an effort to understand how domination and discrimination are reproduced through daily social interactions (Newman 2016; Prichard, 2010; Gordon, 2007; Adams, 2003; Call, 2002; May, 1994). This poststructuralist anarchistic (herein *Postanarchist*) view is vital to the collection, and analysis, of data in this research because it centres analysis around the theme of domination as it is

produced and reproduced in the subjectivity of insecure workers. Moreover, this Postanarchist vision is useful for analysing precarious workers because it seeks to discover the "key features of a future society amid the practices of the present one" (Williams, 2010, p. 245). That is, this Postanarchist vision offers a framework for understanding the potential of workers to challenge and reconstruct their subjectivity-to-work, while being subject-to-work. As with Derrida, this Postanarchist conceptualisation will be detailed fully in Chapter Three. Nevertheless, Derrida's deconstructive philosophy is essential to the analysis of power throughout this thesis as I draw from key analytic themes of Anarchism like direct action, decentralisation, and anti-authority to assess worker subjectivity through the analysis of their responsibilities.

The Case Study

The empirical data in this research was gathered via a case study approach that drew from five sites across the greater Brisbane region (30km radius from CBD), in south-east Queensland. Given the specific focus of my research on power, subjectivity, and the formation of resistant responsibilities amongst precarious workers the case study method was deemed most valuable. The case study, as Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 219) argues, is essential to understanding and clarifying complex social issues. Unlike larger, quantitative studies, the advantage of case studies is their depth of focus on a particular social phenomenon (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 241). In this instance, where the topic of focus is the current ambiguous nature of deviance in the workplace and its effects on challenging power, a case study investigation into the cultivation of power, and responsibility was the most appropriate vehicle.

Each of the five sites selected in the case study was selected in accordance with a set of criteria (detailed in Chapter Four) that ensured workers would most likely be engaged in a precarious, and insecure relationship with the workplace. Six workers from each site participated in a one-on-one, 40 minute, semi-structured interview off-site at a location agreed upon privately between myself and the participant.

In order to ensure a sample size of precarious *and* insecure workers, unskilled and low-skilled employees at large, centralised workplaces were selected in this research. While this sampling technique excludes typically precarious employers like Uber, Deliveroo, or TaskRabbit, it ensures participants included in the research are most likely to experience insecurity in their day-to-day work life. Moreover, by privileging un/low-skilled employees in large, centralised workplaces the research excludes precarious workers who may utilise unsecure employment conditions to increase their individual social mobility. Instead, my sample focuses on workers who are most likely to be

unable to escape the economic conditions they are subject to, and are most likely to represent workers who internalise the anxieties and insecurities of precarious employment. These un/low-skilled workers represent a particularly vulnerable working population in the Australian workforce, and are therefore ideal in this research.

Interview questions were constructed around the theme of responsibility, with participants encouraged to discuss their daily responsibilities and obligations to various social structures (e.g. management, key performance indicators, colleagues, work ethic/work-life balance, family etc.). These various responsibilities were organised into analytic categories using Nvivo software, where they were contrasted to the central theme of 'resistance to insecurity'. The time of the thesis reflects the most resonant finding of 'smart work' that emerged organically throughout the interview process. Smart work, as the reader will see in the final section of this thesis, proves to be a valuable theme with which to understand the mechanisms of resistance that workers employ in the workplace.

Contribution to Knowledge

By investigating the manner in which workers respond to, and challenge precarious and insecure work this research contributes to debates in sociology of work, organisational behaviour, and political philosophy. A fundamental aspect of this investigation into worker responsibility promises to offer insight into the social organisation and effects of insecurity amongst cohorts of workers that are subject to unstable employment conditions and insecure relationships to work. Moreover, the examination of the political nature of deviance amongst this social group promises to add to pre-existing research into micro-politics and 'micro-resistances' that took off in at the turn of the 21st century (see McCabe, 2007; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Korczynski, 2011). In particular, while this research examines similar 'micro-political' behaviours, it seeks to juxtapose these behaviours into the wider political sphere by investigating cohorts of workers, rather than individual workers. This larger group focus will ensure that this research and its empirical data will be valuable to many disciplines that focus on social and political, rather than psychological dimensions of work.

The specific focus and deployment of Postanarchism as a political theory that challenges the authority of both managerial and bureaucratic power, but also neoliberal market power in the workplace is extremely important to the production of knowledge in this thesis. An overarching focus of this research seeks to highlight and illuminate the social and collective interactions of workers as they draw from various networks in the workplace to better re-distribute power. As such, this thesis promises to challenge neoliberal narratives of work that continue to foster the image of

the atomised, liberal worker. Instead I focus on cohorts of workers as a mechanism to explore the organisation of power in more direct and localised processes.

This anarchistic approach to the decentralisation of power and the mutual organisation of deviant workers is the focal point of this thesis. It serves to contribute to the work laid out by Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) on the fundamental role of deviance and misbehaviour in shaping organisational theory and behaviour. My thesis adds to this knowledge by illuminating a consistent political strategy employed by precarious and insecure workers as they attempt to shift power away from the bureaucratic entity of work and use it for mutual benefit of the workers. It adds to the literature and understanding of deviance by showing points at which worker behaviour cannot just challenge, but also contradict neoliberal market rationality by creating time at work that is free from labour production.

Organisation of the thesis

In the first of the two literature review chapters I explore the topic of 'precarious work' and 'job insecurity' while tracing the transformation of job security since the Industrial era. It explores existing literature on the topic of 'job insecurity' and argues that while work has been significantly transformed since the 1970s, the social role of work for individual workers has not. The chapter begins with an analysis of the problem of, and conceptualisation(s) of 'precarious work', as it argues that job insecurity needs to be conceptualised as something more than a fear of a lack of continuous employment. Instead I argue that other — social — factors of work like identity, value, and status need to be taken into consideration when theorising insecurity. Chapter Two finishes with a historical analysis of the transformation of work since the Industrial era. While this analysis agrees that job insecurity has existed since industrial times it highlights the significant role of work as a social feature in everyday life, and illustrates how the emergence of 'non-standard forms of employment' (NSFE) thanks to neoliberal policies have systematically destabilised the relationship between employees and their employers. This chapter situates the problem of job insecurity as a social and political problem that emerges out of the accelerated economic separation of wealth between the owners of capital, and the workers.

Chapter Three addresses the concept of resistance with respect to its use in empirical research in current studies of work. It begins by outlining the literature on deviance and misbehaviour, and the manner in which previous theorists have addressed the divergence of worker behaviour and identity as forms of resistance to work. I share concerns from Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) as well as McCabe (2007) and Contu (2008) that not all deviant behaviour constitutes 'resistance' as I ask what deviant workers are challenging if it is not the labour process.

A fundamental aspect of this chapter conceptualises a notion of resistance that challenges the neoliberal conflation of resistance and identity politics that has been concerning many studies into workplace resistance. To investigate these results, I use Derrida's (1995) concept of responsibility to re-conceptualise the notion of resistance in sociological research. Responsibility is here defined as a form of subjectivity that resists the reduction of political avenues to a singular liberal subject. Like much of Derrida's poststructuralism, responsibility draws from his deconstructive method to present human subjectivity as a process that is continuously redefined through its relationship to social, political, historical, and cultural environments. This conceptual approach challenges liberal and neoliberal notions of subjectivity by conceiving subjectivity as a process that arises from social interactions with others at work.

By conceiving resistance as a form of responsibility, Chapter Three presents a methodological framework around which the thesis will be structured. This conceptualisation of resistance is essential to the thesis because it invites an approach to resistance as a measurable engagement between a worker and specific structures and entities in their working space. Newman's political theory that links Derridean thinking to Anarchist politics (2001; 2010; 2017) is utilised in this chapter as a means of addressing the power struggles inherent in worker responsibility. Just as Anarchist thought deals with the notion of diminishing and localising effects of power, so too do I argue that misbehaving, deviant workers conspire to strengthen local, social responsibilities. By situating resistance as an obligation to local social responsibilities, this chapter presents a conceptual framework around which the research will be organised as I test the resistant responsibilities of workers by the way they respond to, and engage with, specific power-structures to secure their relationship with work.

Chapter Four outlines the research design used to generate and collect data from the research. This chapter applies the conceptualisations from Chapters Two and Three to justify and explain my empirical collection of data. It outlines the processes used to find field sites, achieve a sample, organise questions for the interviews, thematise the findings and outlines the ethical considerations involved with the research. This chapter also outlines how this research project implements the key research question to understand the responses of insecure workers.

Chapter Five presents the first of the three findings chapters. This chapter is concerned with the presentation of practical, and pragmatic experiences of insecurity as well as demonstrating the way in which workers respond to, and organise themselves around specific practices at work. Here I outline the mechanisms that dominate workers' daily routines, and the measures these workers use to push, and test the limits of possible behaviour at work. It shows how workers use the authority inherent in management directives and key performance indicators in various ways to justify corner

cutting, limit or regulate production, socialise, and generally engage in deviant behaviour. These findings contribute to the thesis by setting an empirical foundation for later findings chapters; most specifically this chapter details how work-time and work-space are manipulated by workers towards a shared goal.

Chapter Six analyses the separation of responsibility from standard work obligations in the findings. It builds upon the findings in Chapter Five by examining the role of 'self-responsibility' and more collective political processes which are designed to make work more bearable, and (sometimes) enjoyable for workers. This chapter presents two narratives for deviant responsibility as they emerged in the findings. I criticise the first, and more explicit form in which workers present a more ideological disassociation from work. Nevertheless, I present a second analysis of responsibility in the findings in which I demonstrate how workers successfully deviate from pre-determined responsibility at work. I argue these (successful) processes are emblematic of this Derridean conceptualisation of responsibility because they demonstrate how workers negotiate the limits of the discourse on authority to create forms of responsibility that deviate from the standard work-obligations.

Chapter Seven is the third, and final, findings chapter as well as the core discussion chapter of this thesis. Here I explore the political and strategic aspects of resistance in the workplace. More specifically, I present the theme of being 'smart at work' that emerged throughout the course of my interviews as a common theme amongst the workers. I argue that 'smart work' is emblematic of the shared knowledge between workers in any given workplace. Moreover this shared knowledge illustrates the mechanisms through which workers exchange ideas, experiences, and information around which to better and more effectively behave (and misbehave) at work. In this chapter I show how this disciplinary process is shaped by the workers collective interactions, and how by 'being smart at work', workers demonstrate their strategic and political associations in these otherwise alienating, and precarious worksites.

Importantly, Chapter Seven examines the Anarchist themes of mutual self-organisation as they emerge in accounts of smart work. Anarchistic ideals of informal, decentralised, and direct forms of action are essential to the theme of smart work because they are the means through which workers secure their experiences at work. In this chapter I show that rather than resisting work in its entirety, these workers use work to protect themselves from precarious aspects of contemporary (neoliberal) work as it imposes itself into more personal, individualised avenues of self-discipline.

The thesis finishes with conclusions about the role of resistance, and work, in contemporary society given in Chapter Eight. I respond to the research questions posed in Chapter One by arguing that

workers actively resist processes at work that render them insecure on a daily basis, and I argue that workers learn the knowledge and skills necessary for this resistance from their colleagues, and organisational structures. The results from 'Being Smart at Work' illustrate how workers draw from social experiences, interactions, and knowledge to learn how to best 'behave', or organise themselves at work. Perhaps most importantly, these results show that workers struggle against the threat of social isolation, alienation, uncertainty, and loss of job status and security by engaging in and drawing from their various social networks.

The fundamental aim of this thesis is to understand how workers respond to job insecurity. Most specifically, it aims to understand whether worker's responses to insecure work are effective at changing the social and political dynamics of the workplace, or whether (as some theorists fear) deviant workers merely strive to protect themselves against the experience of insecurity, anxiety, and precarity. This project thus analyses deviant practices of cohorts of workers into a schema of responsibility. By investigating the formation of responsibility I demonstrate (in Chapter Six) how worker responsibilities reflect obligations to not just work duties, but also social responsibilities to other workers. These social responsibilities are demonstrated (in Chapter Seven) through the practice of *smart work* in which workers perform and organise themselves around these responsibilities. In order to meet these social responsibilities and 'work smart, not hard' these workers collectively learn and share strategies to make work more ideal. This ideal behaviour reflects a form of Anarchist organisation by engaging workers in a process of mutual self-organisation. This thesis therefore sets out to clarify this organisational process and explain the manner in which worker subjectivity is being shaped by, as well as challenging the effects of precarious work.

Chapter 2: The Transformation of Insecurity

This chapter begins by analysing the concept of 'job insecurity'. The analysis takes part in two sections; first I examine existing theorisations of precarious work, and job insecurity, and argue that job insecurity refers to more than unstable or non-permanent employment contracts. Instead I utilise conceptualisations of job insecurity that focus on the shifting role of work in society. Here I argue that the role and status of working has shifted and that work, as a social institution, has been rendered precarious. It is within this structural precarity that I situate the phenomena of rising job insecurity in this thesis. The second section of this chapter seeks to support this conceptualisation of rising job insecurity by tracing a brief history of precarity and insecurity since the industrial era. This history focuses on the economic separation of wealth between capital and labour and highlights the manner in which this separation of wealth has accelerated in since the 1970s. I situate the effects of (in)security on worker subjectivity within this economic history by illustrating how, at certain points in history workers are pushed towards movements like unionisation, mass absenteeism, or increased consumption. Clarifying these links are vital to the conceptualisation of precarity and insecurity in this research because they detail the manner in which worker subjectivity is systematically cultivated by work, and thus help to situate the responses and struggles of individual workers in later chapters.

Central to my conceptualisation of job insecurity in this chapter are its political and economic origins in the structural organisation of work, and the manner in which the shifting role of work affects individual workers. This conceptualisation focuses on the social level of interaction whereby work serves as a fundamental social institution to orient and socialise individual workers. Here I extend the conceptualisation of precarious work beyond economic conceptualisations that focus on contractual precarity and non-standard forms of employment. Instead I argue that the continuous push of economic precarity has created the social phenomenon of precarity such that the social institution of work has shifted meaning. More specifically, I conceptualise precarious work here as an issue in which the very institution of work has become insecure as a means of securing social stability. The concept of precarious work then refers to a state in which the social institution that is 'work' has become precarious and that workers are necessary subject to insecure relationships within employment.

While there was a surge of theorists presenting cases for the future of work as an insecure and precarious one at the turn of the 21st century (Sennett, 1998; Beck, 2000; Bauman, 2001; Castells, 2010), more recent theorists like Doogan (2009; 2015), Kalleberg, (2009) Gallie et al. (2016) and Armano, Bove, and Murgia (2017) have presented important cases for rethinking the concept of

'precarious work'. Central to these accounts is the argument that precarious work cannot refer solely to the anxiety in the loss of employment. Instead they argue, as do I in this chapter, that precarious work needs to include a greater fear about the role, and status, of work now and in the future. More specifically, this chapter argues that job insecurity illuminates a fear from workers that work is becoming both uncertain, more risky, and less valuable as it demands and consumes more from its workers while offering fewer social rewards in return.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that precarity and job insecurity are concerned with more than the length of tenure or employment with an employer. Instead, I argue that the traditional Marxist interpretation of working class struggle as one between 'capital and labour' is no longer applicable in contemporary times. Instead, I agree with Fleming's (2014, p. 159) synopsis that this precarious state of work can be explained by the struggle between 'capital and life', rather than of capital and labour. This division between capital and life highlights the ubiquity of insecurity in contemporary time as job insecurity transcends industries, sectors, class, gender, and ethnic dimensions to threaten all workers around the globe.

While Australian history enjoys its own share of unique and idiosyncratic events, the transformation of Australian work since the industrial era follows a familiar trajectory of global capitalism. Thus, in the second section of this chapter I have presented a brief history of the transformation of insecurity and work since the industrial era that situates Australian events within this wider global context. Such a narrative presents the Australian experience of work such that periods of certainty or precarity are understood to follow global events like trade agreements, the World Wars, and several global economic depressions. This chapter is in no way meant to present an all-encompassing history of work in Australia; such a task has undertaken in far greater detail by other authors (see Bramble, 2008; Macintyre, 2009). Instead, this chapter aims to present current Australian labour conditions as ones that are situated — like much of the world in the 21st century — around neoliberal policies that favour multinational corporations, in addition to the privatisation of public assets, the continual decline of labour unions, and the rise of precarious and insecure forms of employment thanks to outsourcing of labour contracts, rising debt, and the deterioration of the middle class.

Work and the Experience of Insecurity

At the turn of the 21st century there was a considerable focus on the emergence of workplace insecurity and precarious work (Castells, 2010; Sennett, 1998; Bauman, 2001; Beck, 2000). These authors represent a sociological trend that insists that rapid globalisation and late-capitalism

threaten the social security of not just individual workers but entire societies in the near future. The core of these arguments centre on an antagonism that arises around concepts of 'capital' and 'labour'. Beck sums up the antagonism with the aphorism "capital is global, and labour is local" (2000, p. 27). More specifically, Beck suggests that money, and economic investment, can move from place to place, and transnationally, far more easily than individual workers (and their families) who rely on economic investments to maintain employment and their livelihoods.

The issue of insecurity emerges closely with the experience of social alienation that is caused by economic mobility. Beck argues that a political economy of insecurity is created as individual workers are caught between fixed political players (i.e. trade unions, governments, parliaments) and non-territorially fixed economic players (capital, finance, and commerce) (2000, p. 2). This increased mobility of capitalism affords it a power, Beck argues, that privileges it against individuals and specifically individual workers, who are less flexible and who find themselves at the mercy of market forces. "It is jobs, not people who will migrate" in this era, writes Beck as he argues that the balance of power in contemporary society favours the capitalist more so than the labour force (2000, p. 33). Bauman, too, argues that a "unilateral" "disengagement between capital and labour" (2001, p. 201) emerges in contemporary times as the movements of capital become more autonomously global than those of the worker who is tied to a country, and a family, and a home.

Nevertheless, a distinction needs to be made between the insecurity of today, and the insecurity – or alienation – that has traditionally been the focus of Marx, and Marxists since the Industrial Revolution. The separation of workers from the material and social value of their work because of the organisational power of capital was also integral to Marx's analysis of capitalism in at the midst of the Industrial Revolution (1932, pp. 29-33). Marx referred to this process of separation as one of 'alienation' because it marks the objectification of the individual worker into an instrument whose sole aim is to produce capital. As a human entity, Marx warned that workers were thus alienated from their own humanity in the sense that they became a lifeless object to be used at will by the whims of a capitalistic economy. Marx writes:

> …it is clear that the more the worker spends himself [sic], the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own…The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the more the worker lacks objects. Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself. (Marx, 1932, p. 29)

While Marx's capitalist analysis has been central to sociological, political, and economic analyses of work, its applicability in contemporary times has been much debated. In the preface of Standings' (2011) analysis into the rise of a precarious class of workers, he states the attraction of precarious (read as 'non-permanent employment') work as one that offers an alternative to "twentieth century labourism" (p. vii). The implication is that non-permanent work offers workers a way out of these alienating or "drab full-time jobs" (Standing, 2011, p. 1). While Standing does not pursue this ideological aspect of precarious work, he makes the point that while precarious work shares similarities with Marx's concept of alienation, it is distinctly different (Standing, 2011, p. 6). While Marx's theory of alienation suggested that the continuous objectification of capitalism would separate workers and push them to the limits of capitalism (Marx, 1932, p. 53) the reality of precarious work has been that workers are even more closely intertwined and reliant upon the economic whims of capitalism. Newman offers a similar criticism of Marx when he argues that capitalism has not objectified social life, but rather it has *transcended* social life. He argues that the flow of, and our experience of capitalism has become more ubiquitous in the 21st century (2010, pp. 171-172). He argues that Marxism, and even post-Marxism focuses too heavily on power struggles with "state sovereignty" or with ideological aspects of state domination (2010, p. 92). Instead, he suggests we ought to look towards more fluid approaches to society to understand the development of precarious work that is prefigured by a capitalist movement away from state regulation. This more 'fluid' approach to society is best summarised by Beck's (2000) analysis of the destandardisation of work in the 21st century. Here he argues that the boundaries between worker and non-work are starting to blur. He says:

> …what is now developing is a destandardised, fragmented, plural 'underemployment system' characterised by highly flexible, time-intensive and spatially decentralised forms of deregulated paid labour. As a result, the boundaries between work and non-work are starting to blur, in respect of time, space, and contractual content… (Beck, 2000, p. 77)

Consequently, insecurity arises as an issue of mobility in the 21st century of work, whereby workers appear to be affected more by the loss of regularly paid labour, and the submersion of social, non-work time with work-time thanks to technological "advances". Such a concern does not imply that the burden of alienation, as well as monotonous and repetitive work is no longer an issue. On the contrary, both issues are still synchronous with issues today, however, the abundance of personal debt, diminishing wage growth, and the prevalence of underemployment suggest that having steady but alienating work is more advantageous than not having enough work. There is also the suggestion — as this thesis will demonstrate in chapters fix, six, and seven — that such

alienation or estrangement has become a desirable product of labour given the reality of work, today.

Standing argues that the threat of uncertain wage relations has created a new class dynamic in which workers find themselves precariously positioned in society. He argues that this new 'precarious' class do not just lack an income, or secure employment, but rather that this group of workers "lack a secure work-based identity" (2011, p. 9). "There is no shadow of the future" that hangs over the actions of precarious workers", argues Standing (2011, p. 12) as he emphasises the effects this lack of identity has on individual workers who are ostracised and separated from their own social and political interactions at work. This lack of identity is problematic for Standing because it causes workers to lack a political, or class consciousness that would allow it to struggle for better working conditions. Standing argues that "the precariat is not a class-for-itself" and that this is so "partly because it is at war with itself" (2011, p. 25). Later on the same page, he explains that "tensions within the precariat are setting people against each other…preventing them from recognising that the social and economic structure is producing their common set of vulnerabilities" (Standing, 2011, p. 25). He gives the example:

> One group in it may blame another for its vulnerability and indignity. A temporary low-wage worker may be induced to see the 'welfare scrounger' as obtaining more, unfairly and at his or her expense. A long-term resident of a low-income urban area will easily be led to see incoming migrants as taking better jobs and leaping to head the queue for benefits. (Standing, 2011, p. 25)

Doogan (2015) however, warns that we ought to be wary of varying accounts of precarity. In addition to the view espoused by Standing (as well as Beck and Bauman), Doogan explains that precarity has also been described as "a mode of social control in which labour is disciplined by the threat of job loss and the uncertainty of employment prospects" (2015, p. 43). This view is integral to theorists like Hardt and Negri who situate the evolution of precarious work as a capitalist quasi-conspiracy that is a natural evolution of late-capitalism (2000). Nevertheless, Doogan takes care to disentangle the notions of *insecurity* (defined as a lack of confidence in an economic situation) from *instability* (defined as a lack of continuous employment) (2009, p. 169). Instead he argues that the conceptualisation of precarity in recent times is one driven by ideological forces, rather than empirical forces given statistics from the OECD that suggest that "long term employment has increased in many sectors of the advanced economies" (2015, p. 46). Drawing from Bell's post-industrial narrative of society Doogan understands contemporary precarious work as one

exemplified by the "rise of the service sector" that can be associated with "occupational and compositional change" (Bell, 1974 as cited in Doogan, 2015, p. 51). This process of deindustrialisation, and the (precarious) transformation of work, Doogan suggests, ought to be reconciled as a "restructuring of the labour market", that affects "patterns of employment, and the quality of jobs" (2015, p. 59). Doogan's account is essential here because it focuses on, and traces, empirical changes in the labour markets as precedents for shifting conceptualisations of security and precarity.

Doogan's analysis of job insecurity can be used to supplement Shukaitis' (2013) commentary that 'precarious work' has, in recent times, moved from a marginal phenomenon of a form of "escape from the dictates of permanent wage labour" to a "much more central dynamic of neoliberal labour markets (2013, p. 641)". Here Shukaitis argues that the increasing demand for 'flexible' labour markets helps to embed insecurity across social status (2013, p. 644). A similar argument is presented by Gallie et al. (2016) who conceptualise job insecurity as not just a "fear of loss of employment" but also an "anxiety about threat to *job status*" (2016, p. 2). As such, Gallie et al. (2016) position the problem of job insecurity, and precarious work, as a socio-political one that emerges from an empirical shift in the labour market outlined above by Doogan. However, Gallie et al.'s account emphasises the sociological effect that this increasingly non-permanent employment has on shaping the role and meaning of work; as employment in more jobs becomes less secure, the status and meaning of employment in society also changes. In a similar vein Shukaitis argues that precarity is "not just a question of the changing composition of labour, but of experimenting with modes of being and community that are not determined by labour" (2013, p. 658). This is to say, insecurity here is defined as an experience of change; it signifies the disruption of traditional patterns of work behaviour that were standardised throughout the early 20th century, and around which many social institutions like housing, education, and wealth have been organised.

Rather than a normative principle, or a class characteristic (as Standing describes it) I define job insecurity as a phenomena that accompanies the perception of risk at work. As a perception of risk, job insecurity is tied inherently to the structural precarity and instability of work, today. Deranty defines the problem of precarious work as one of a "politics of fear" that operates through the internalisation of fear, anxiety, insecurity, and social distrust (2008, p. 461). He explains as follows:

> The affect that arises at work and from work, to subsequently vitiate all social bonds, is fear: the fear of losing one's job; the fear arising from systematically organized competition with other workers both inside and outside the work place; the fear of not being able to achieve

> ever increasing productivity targets; the fear of not coping when the productivity targets and the work organization are in contradiction; the fear of being caught at fault by the surveillance of management (when using shortcuts is the only way to achieve targets); the fear of not being able to adapt in the face of the systematic compulsion to introduce rapid and constant changes, and so on. (Deranty, 2008, pp. 456-457)

While Deranty focuses on the psychological and philosophical internalisation of 'fear' that accompanies precarious work, this definition supplements the conceptualisation of precarious work as one of heightened 'risk' that is commonly used. For instance, Kalleberg (2009, p. 2) shares a similar definition of precarious work as "employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker". This perception of risk, and the sociological construction of it will be central to the following section as I trace the transformation of "work security" from the industrial era to the present time. Paramount to this perception of risk and insecurity in the workplace has been the political organisation of power between individual employees and their employers. As Fleming (2014, p. 159) points out, the relationship today is "not simply between capital and labour as it was under Fordism." Instead he argues that the ubiquity of capital as it spreads across all social institutions has refigured the organisation of power into a more universal struggle between "capital and life" (2014, p. 159). This struggle, I will explain in the following section, is fundamental to the experience of insecurity amongst workers in contemporary times because it illustrates the (neoliberal) conceptualisation of human beings as an *economic resource.* It is a struggle that emerges from the conceptualisation of human capital theory that accompanies the concept of the 'gig economy', 'portfolio careers', and 'flexible work'.

Insecurity, Mobility, and the Precarious Transformation of Work

The experience of insecurity is nothing new to human civilisation. While work insecurity may be tied to the evolution of capitalism, some reports may trace insecurity as far back as 1490BCE where the earliest known event of a unionised movement is known to have eventuated in Egypt (Grint, 2005, p. 68). Moreover, if we are to believe existentialists like Albert Camus, or Jean-Paul Sartre, insecurity is a quintessentially human experience, and could be argued to be indivisible from the human experience. However, the re-emergence of insecurity as a concept in recent sociological research on work and globalisation suggests that insecurity is accelerating in recent times and deserves a closer empirical analysis. Moreover, as outlined above, these sociological conceptualisations of insecurity can be tied to the shifting nature of capital in the 21st century. Subsequently, the following section will trace the evolution of insecurity in the Australian labour

force since the Industrial Revolution. This analysis serves to highlight the political and social nature of insecurity as worker subjectivity is shaped in accordance with global events, international policy, and the growing global mobility of capital. Fundamental to this timeline will be the illustration of work as a fundamentally social experience; namely the presentation of work as an institution that shapes human subjectivity around global forces.

Industrialisation and the Beginning of Insecurity: 1800-1870

While the Industrial Revolution was by no means the beginning of workplace conflict, it nevertheless marks a pivotal point in the creation of work as we know it today. The circulation of steam engine technology into the general public in Great Britain and Europe in the early 19th century had a significant effect on the relationship between workers and work. While steam technology offered a more powerful mechanism of energy production than human or animal labour, its greatest contribution to the evolution of work is arguably its function as a form of inanimate energy. As an inanimate form of energy, steam technology offered workplaces a form of energy that was objectifiable and divisible from human labour. It was a form of energy that was more reliable than humans; it would operate around the clock regardless of sleep, climate, or fatigue. Moreover, machines could function without the need for explicit management; they did not talk back, rebel and its output did not falter — its production output was uniform.

A key contribution to the formation of social security for workers in the industrial era emerges through the separation of workers from their private life, and from their homes. While in preindustrial times work was tied more closely to family life, and kinship groups, and was performed for the purpose of securing ties to land, family, and community, the industrial era brought with it a mass urbanisation as work became reliant on (expensive) machinery that was owned and leased by those with capital in the cities. Edgell (2012, p. 29) argues that a central aspect of the separation of home and work emerges alongside this distinctive pattern of technology that organised life around industrial work. As life became more fundamentally reliant on industrial work, so too was social stability and security achieved by working in these industrial arrangements for a wage.

This organisational shift is referred to as the emergence of ‘standardised work’. Standardised work should not be confused with the idea of ‘job stability’ which is often colloquially used in contemporary arguments to refer to a ‘golden age’ of employment (generally after World War Two) in which a perception exists that there was a job available for all those who wanted one. Instead, ‘standardised work’ here refers to the beginning of a systematic organisation of work that occurs (1)

outside the home, (2) for cash payment, (3) by (often male) adults on a full-time and uninterrupted basis, and (4) can be exchanged globally (Edgell, 2012, p. 27). While both Edgell (2012, pp. 27-28) and Grint (2005, p. 40) stress that there were always other systems for production, it seems safe to conclude — given mass rural to urban migration, industrial manufacturing rates, and growing global exports (Beaud, 1984, pp. 83-97) — that this economic configuration of working practices significantly contributed to the dominant conception of work at the time. The emergence of this concept of 'standardised' and mechanised production in the industrial period led many workers into monotonous work routines that were organised around machine output.

The emergence of this monotonous form of work, as well as the separation of home and work, the emergence of new and more technologically specialist work roles and places, and a more profit-oriented market system helped facilitate the seeds of uncertainty and insecurity. With standardisation and monotonous routines came the fear that that work was losing its social value. As work became a social institution distinct from home and family life there was a concern about social isolation and a lack of purpose. The Luddite movement in, and after, 1811 exemplified the emergence of these concerns as they rallied against "economic destabilisation and the erosion of livelihoods" (Gordon, 2007, p. 142). Gordon argues that the Luddites were not opposed to the technical advance of society as they are often said to be, but rather that the object of their resistance was the "economic destabilisation and the erosion of livelihoods" that accompanies these particular industrial technological advances (Gordon, 2007, p. 142). Gordon cites Sale (1996) when he explains that it was the economic consequences of technological practices that were the focus of the Luddite destruction of machinery:

> It wasn't all machinery that the Luddites opposed, but "all Machinery hurtful to the Commonality" [capitals in original]… to which their commonality did not give approval, over which it had no control, and the use of which was detrimental to its interests, considered either as a body of workers or as a body of families and neighbours and citizens. It was machinery, in other words, that was produced with only economic consequences in mind, and those of benefit to only a few, while the myriad social and environmental and cultural ones were deemed irrelevant. (as cited in Gordon, 2007, p. 142)

The reactionary approach to the technological organisation of work in the industrial era illustrates a burgeoning insecurity that was emerging in this period. More importantly, this Luddite conception of 'commonality' demonstrates the concern from these workers about the loss of a social element of work in which their subjectivity was being shaped instead by the cold industrial machinery. Several decades later, Marx detailed his theory of *estranged labour* to more effectively distinguish between

the introduction of machinery and the socio-political issue of working class oppression. Estranged labour, for Marx, was a form of alienation. However, in addition to alienation — which signified a separation between a worker and the material product of their labour — estranged labour, or estrangement, signifies the separation between the worker from their social experience: both at work, but also from wider society.

As the experience of separation from the external (socio-political) world, estrangement signifies the separation of the individual worker in the industrial era that is accompanied by a fear of the loss of value, and status, and the control over their work. Such a process of estrangement is not confined to the analysis of work, however, it is a social issue. The estrangement of workers in the workplace was so problematic for Marx (and sociologists) because it illustrated the manner in which the institution of work could be distinguished from other social institutions (like the family) by separate notions of space, time, and culture. Edgell's (2012) analysis of the separation of work from other social institutions is useful here for characterising the shifting nature of work in the industrial period. Here Edgell argues that the industrial era signifies a point in which work became a different economic and social institution to the family:

> The cumulative effect of all these radical changes to the nature and organization of work associated with capitalist industrialization was that work ceased to be embedded in non-economic social institutions, such as the family and became a separate, distinct institution in terms of space, time and culture. Thus it has been noted that the spatial separation of work from family *also* involved the differentiation of work time from non-work time, and a set of impersonal work relations which contrasted with the affective bonds of family life. (Edgell, 2012, p. 17)

Edgell's focus on the institutional distinction of "space, time and culture" characterises this distinctive shift in the nature and organisation of work which Marx argues emerges as workers are estranged from social life. Just as workers are removed from the means of production in the workplace, so too are they estranged from an active role in the transformation of society. Marx summarises this point through his concept of 'species-being' or below, as species-life in which Marx argues that the objectified worker loses their ability to transform themselves.

> The object of labour is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created. In tearing away from man the object

> of his production, therefore, estranged labour tears from him his *species-life*, his real objectivity as a member of the species and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him. (Marx, 1932, p. 32)

Consequently, by separating workers from both the products of their labour, as well as the social experiences typically associated with working, the industrial era played an integral role in rendering workers insecure. To combat the rising sense of insecurity afforded by capitalism's alienating nature, workers unions, and workers movements began to sprout across the world. By 1848 civil unrest about both political conditions, as well as poor working conditions, had erupted across much of Europe, and parts of Latin America. While the revolutions of 1848 were quickly squashed by their respective nation states (Weyland, 2009), the widespread outbreak of unrest can be argued to have been invigorated by the uncertainty and instability of the time. Perhaps the most prominent organisation of workers against this industrial organisation of capital was the organisation of the International Workingman's Association (IWA) in 1864 — otherwise known as the "First International". The First International, according to their first address published in the Bee-Hive Newspaper (1864), was a movement to unite and unionise "workingmen's societies existing in different countries" towards the same end "viz., the protection, advancement, and complete emancipation of the working classes". Beaud (1984, p. 129) reports that by 1870 union levels in Britain alone had reached 1 million members, with the level growing more slowly in Germany as it only reached 680,000 by the end of the century. While this period of unionisation was simply the beginning of the global unionisation of workers, it was an important stepping stone for communicating and realising the effects of industrial capitalism for the workers of the world. More importantly it signifies the beginning of a social struggle from workers all around the work to secure their place in society.

It was a vastly different social landscape in Australia which was still in the midst of its colonial, and pastoral expansion during this industrial expansion in Great Britain. While cattle, and the cultivation of cereals was a predominant vocation amongst many Australian workers, sheep and wool production was by far the largest employer in Australia during this period (Macintyre, 2009, p. 58). Australian wool producers "captured an increasing share of the British market in the first half of the 19th century as British imports of fleece increased tenfold in the period between 1810 and 1850 (Macintyre, 2009, p. 58). It wasn't until the discovery of gold, in early 1840s that (white) Australian society began to undergo the early stages of industrialisation. "During the 1850s" writes Macintyre "Victoria contributed more than one-third of the world's gold output" as the number of new arrivals to Australia began to grow substantially in the next 10 years (2009, p. 87). The

entrepreneurial lifestyle of gold diggers was enough to attract farmers, labourers, and seamen in the hope of securing a better standard of living. In stark contrast to the fear of economic instability and insecurity emerging in Industrial England and parts of Europe, Australian workers seemed to embrace the economic instability at the time for the hope of private gain. Indeed, the folklore surrounding the uprising at the Eureka Stockade in 1854 — in which gold miners had "burned their gold licences as a gesture of defiance against perceived government corruption and inequitable administration" (Sunter, 2009, p. 49) — suggests that workers were concerned with, and opposed to, the regulation of labour during this period. According to Sunter this act was understood by Karl Marx himself to be "a precursor to his socialist revolution" (Sunter, 2009, p. 49).

The Gradual Regulation of Capitalism: 1870-1914

The end of the 19th century saw a gradual regulation of industry in Great Britain. The driving factors of regulation were likely a mixture of the gradual saturation of market supply, as well as the mounting pressure on industry from the unionisation of workers towards the end of the century. The effect of unionisation was effective at bringing workers together, and the international membership of the IWA was essential to intervening in the global process of industrialisation. However, in 1872 a schism occurred in the IWA's annual meeting in Hague between Karl Marx and the Anarchist Mikhail Bakunin and their respective followers over the role of the unions in 'emancipating the working class'. Bakunin opposed Marx's intentions to form a centralised authority in the IWA and organise the workers movement around Marx's socialist political agenda (Bakunin, 1873; Graham, 2004, p. 93), and so in 1872 the First International was split in two. While both versions of the IWA dissolved a few years later the IWA had managed to reach members in the millions. Frieden argues that the labour movement played a fundamental aspect in organising social and political life in this era:

> As the labor [sic] movement grew, it too came to represent a challenge to the established order. It was not that workers opposed global economic integration — in fact many countries labor [sic] unions and Socialist parties strongly supported free trade — but the demands of labor [sic] clashed with the classical liberal system's reliance on flexible wages and minimal government. (Frieden, 2006, p. 117)

The campaign by workers unions to regulate the conditions of labour and capitalism for workers played an important role in organising and protecting the working classes during the economic depression(s) that plagued much of Europe, the United States, and Australia throughout the 1870s and 1880s. While industrial production continued on a massive scale, it appeared that the global market had reached a saturation point. Beaud reports that "while forge owners in 1873 were able to

produce 2.5 million tons of rails, consumption fell to 500,000 tons and their price dropped by 60 per cent from 1872 to 1881 (2002: 136)". This drop in consumption was accompanied by both "rising construction costs" and increasing competition between rival companies which meant that stock, profits, and the promise of ongoing work all deteriorated at this time. During the mid-1880s In the United States, Beaud (2002, p. 136-137) reports a "slowdown in industrial activity, bankruptcies, more unemployment, and wage reductions (from 15-22 per cent in metallurgy, form 25-30 per cent in textiles)." The social impact of this economic depression can be understood by the fact that most workers in Britain and the United States had been earning wages in the last third of the 19th century (Beaud, 1984, p. 89) and had come to rely on a regular wage. Edgell also suggests that while women were certainly involved in paid forms of work, the systematic exclusion of women from work outside the home (including campaigns for 'a family wage', trade union restrictions on women workers, legislative restrictions by (male) parliamentarians, limits on child labour, and the large size of the Victorian family) would have increased the reliance of entire families on this single working wage (Edgell, 2012, p. 26). This increased reliance from workers and their families suggests a tenuous and insecure relationship between workers and work during this era.

Businesses were eventually able to stabilise profits (and thus offer some certainty, and eventually security to the workforce) by expanding their business. While Britain and France struggled to continue to post national profits, Germany and — in particular the United States — succeeded in increasing exports by four and five times the growth between 1875 and 1913 (Beaud, 2002, p. 158). The key to such expansion appeared to arise from a combination of 'protectionism' at home and foreign investment in new countries that were "industrialising, urbanising, and equipping themselves (Beaud, 2002, p. 158)". This blend of foreign policy with national preservation lead economic historians like Beaud (2002, p. 137), and Frieden (2006) to coin this stage of history as 'the age of imperialism", as the Global North continued to invest in newly colonised countries like South Africa, Panama, Argentina, New Zealand, and Australia.

While the uptake of foreign investment helped to stabilise the demand for industrial manufactured goods, and local labour, the guarantee of stable, ongoing work was still uncertain in Australia. Thanks to substantial investments in farming from Britain "wool production increased tenfold" and "by the early 1870s it once more led gold as the country's leading export" (Macintyre, 2009, p. 100). Nevertheless, the instability of the global recession placed a heavy burden on small business operators who often cut employee wages, and turned to immigrant labourers who they could hire for a fraction of the price. The 1891 Shearers Strike in Queensland was Australia's most iconic response to the global recession and the ongoing uncertainty of work in which shearers on

Jondaryan Station united with unions all around Australia to protest the termination of workers for causal labourers who would work for lower wages. The strike, however, was one of many that eventuated in the wake of the depression as the Australian economy shrank by 30 per cent between 1891 and 1895, with unemployment reaching 30 per cent of the skilled labour force in 1893 (Macintyre, 2009, p. 129). These concerns about the instability of working life were ratified in the first Australian federal election in 1901 when the 'protectionist party' was voted into power under the promise of restricting immigration and protect employee wages. Similar social and political movements erupted around the globe, with the most notable example being the rise of Lenin's Bolshevik Party in Russia.

Providing a secure and certain wage was not the only factor contributing to a growing unease with conditions of work, however. In the United States the promise of continuous, stable work was not enough to encourage workers through the doors of the Ford Motor Company. In protest to the strictly codified, repetitive, and monotonous organisation of factory work, a significant proportion of employees quit work. It is reported that in 1913 employee turnover at the Ford factories was over 350 per cent.

> Ford required between 13,000 and 14,000 workers to run his plants at any one time, and in that year over 50,000 workers quit. At the end of this same year, in order to add 100 persons to the work force in one factory, the company found it was necessary to hire 963 workers. (Beynon [1973] & Sward [1948] as cited in Beaud 2002, p. 181)

To solve the problem, Henry Ford – the owner of the Ford Motor Company - instigated three changes to the way his factories operated. First, he increased the rate of pay from $2-3 a day to $5 a day. Second, he capped the standard working day at 8 hours a day. And thirdly, he gave his workers social provisions like trade school, hospitals, bands, athletic parks, newspapers, and shops (Edgell, 2012, p. 97). The provisions virtually transformed absenteeism overnight. These concessions from Ford had managed to both incentivise his workers, as well as stimulate the economy by creating a body of working class citizens who could afford to purchase the cars that they were producing. Beaud suggests that in the United States by 1929 19 out of 100 citizens owned an automobile compared to 2 out of 100 in France and Britain (2002, p. 182). This increased consumption patterns afforded to workers in the United States was essential to national growth as the United States which experienced a 90 per cent growth in industry over the coming years (Beaud, 1983, p. 157).

The security afforded to both workers, and capitalists from this era of growth for the United States is a vital development in the transformation of work in the 20th century. Despite widespread insecurity in this period caused by a lack in global demand that lingered from the first of the great global recessions, workers' security was achieved through a careful regulation of capital through a state, or social form of capitalism. While union movements often challenged modes of capitalist production, they more or less ensured — in the long run — that workers stayed employed long enough to remain *active consumers*. This active participation in economic consumption suggests that workers achieve security through a different manner to the workers of the previous industrial era. Whereas previously the threat of insecurity was focused on the division of workers from their family and kinship ties, now the threat of insecurity emerges through the fear of global economic instability. Subsequently, security is achieved for the working class not from protection against capitalism and the separation of labour and capital, but ironically, from the seamless integration of work around capital markets. Perhaps more precisely, this integration of capital and labour was performed by adapting social apparatus (i.e. wages, healthcare, and social services) around working citizens.

The World Wars: 1914-1944

The First World War had a dramatic effect on much of the working world in the 1920s, with the exception of the United States which profited from the war (Frieden, 2006, pp. 130-132; Beaud, 2002, p. 171). The loss of men who would otherwise be working, and the closure and restriction of international trade forced many economies around the world into economic hardship. While there may have been an upside considering that women were brought into the workforce to replace the men who went to war, it appears that women often lost their jobs when (if) the men returned from war (Grint, 2005, pp. 80-83). Overall, the effect of the war on the relationship between capital and labour forces was increased, and stifling, regulations such that led to a decrease in economic activity, growth, and stability for both capitalists and labourers around the world.

A fundamental threat to the security of workers during this era was mass unemployment. Beaud reports that unemployment levels amongst British workers at more than 1 million throughout the 1920s (Beaud, 2002, p. 174).

> The number of unemployed workers in all sectors of activity reached 3 million in 1930, exceeded 6 million in 1931, 10 million in 1932, and 13 million in 1933. Labour productivity continued to increase (by 23 per cent between 1929 and 1933), but wages went down by one-third to one-fourth, depending on the source, from 1929 to 1933. (Beaud, 2002, p. 184)

This crushing instability of work was amplified by the cost of debt from the wars. The accumulation of debt by most countries involved in the war created a considerable sense of uncertainty, as the value of a national economies declined, and the payoff to, and reward for working became less clear and beneficial for individual workers. Economic inflation hit Germany the hardest following the cessation of the first war as the German mark underwent hyperinflation of 4.2 trillion per cent (Frieden, 2006, p. 135). The lack of fiscal mobility forced upon Germany and much of the central and Eastern European block created a wave of socialist movements against European capitalism. The rise of the Soviet Union in 1922, after its Civil War period, was one such example of the anti-capitalist push for an alternative to capitalistic exploitation of labour answer from the East.

However, the Western allies, who faced fewer post-war difficulties than Eastern and Central Europe (Frieden, 2006, p. 138), still struggled to bring confidence back to its working class. Even when the British Pound stabilised in 1925 it "found itself priced out of world markets" (Frieden, 2006, p. 138). As a result "British unemployment stayed above 10 per cent through the 1920s" (Frieden, 2006, p. 139; Beaud, 2002, p. 187). In order to stimulate growth and eventually, sentiments of security, much of the world began (again) investing greatly in overseas ventures, particularly in Latin America. By the end of the 1920's world exports had expanded to double pre-World War One levels (Frieden, 2006, p. 140). The United States led the world in its foreign ventures, however, heavy funding also came from London, Paris, Amsterdam and some other European creditors (Frieden, 2006, p. 141). Nevertheless, Western capitalism proved to be too bold and eventually the global market came to a halt when, in 1929, the Wall Street stock market crashed in the United States which effectively halted the investment around the world.

The (second) Great Depression that followed the 1929 market crash proved, once again, that unregulated open market capitalism was at odds with secure, and stable social development. The working class, especially in Britain, paid heavily for the effects of open capitalism throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Beaud, 1984, p. 164) as the pressures of increased productivity, and growing unemployment pushed poor families to the brink of starvation. In Spain this working class insecurity erupted into a civil war in 1936 as the Spanish people rebelled against "the disgraceful social disorders" bought about by the economic afflictions of the day (Ibanez [1934] as cited in Graham, 2004, p. 458). The Spanish Civil War symbolised a conflict at the heart of the new global economy and was emblematic of greater world divisions between conceptualisations of national security. While the Central and Eastern European states alongside Japan had adopted a more conservative/interventionist economic approach to stabilise and protect local workforces, the West still seemed in favour of a more entrepreneurial economic approach. This conflict, of course, erupted into the Second World War in 1939.

Australia, too, felt the duel effects of the war(s) and the depression. As one of Britain's debtors, the Australian economy relied heavily on its exports to Britain as well as Europe, so the breakout of war and the Great Depression decimated the Australian economy during this period. The beginning of the First World War witnessed a 30 per cent decrease in exports in the first year, which resulted in commercial prices becoming greater than working wages (Macintyre, 2009, p. 163). While there was a marginal improvement in the labour market after the First World War, this proved to be in capital gains thanks to increased modes of mechanisation. The lack of wealth finding the pockets of workers is reflected in the continual growth of Australia's already substantial unemployment rate at the time which grew from 13 per cent in 1921 to 28 per cent in 1931 (Macintyre, 2009, p. 179). The collapse of Wall Street in 1929 resulted in Australia being forced to take on 'austerity measures' which resulted in wages being cut nationally by 10 per cent, and the devaluation of the Australian dollar by 25per cent in 1931 (Macintyre, 2009, p. 178). These catastrophic employment conditions arose at the same time that the National Party in Australia waged a political war on the trade unions in the mid-1920s (accusing them of being 'communists') and thus dismantling the trade union's footing in Australia (Macintyre, 2009, p. 173). While the Australian economy began to pick up a bit in the 1930s thanks to the cheaper currency, the onset of the Second World War plunged Australia back into hardship, and the absence of union representation at the time only compounded issues and instability for the Australian working classes.

Overall insecurity — during this period — is tied heavily to a fear of the depreciation of the national economy. While workers suffered, their bargaining position also suffered thanks to growing poverty shaped by inflation and global instability. While countries like Australia and Britain looked to achieve security through austerity measures, these measures saved expenditure from capitalists and effectively amplified the economic hardships faced by the working classes. The United States, however, led by Fordist principles of capitalist production was more effective at creating consistent work and growth, and passing on the economic prosperity to its people. The economic success of the United States over this period highlights the insurmountable social and political reliance on industrial development and industrial growth to support social growth and stability. Beaud explains the role of industrial development on engaging a secure and dynamic workforce:

> The crisis of the 1920s and 1930s resulted from the same combination of contradictions that essentially led to the 1914-18 war: the loss of energy in industries of the first industrialisation; accentuation of competition between national capitalisms; pressures by the workers' movement to obtain a less unequal division of produced values…But industries of

> the second generation were at this time in full development. And, in a striking dialectical reversal, the rise in buying power of some fractions of the working class, which in the eyes of most capitalists should have ruined the system, revealed itself to be an element of economic dynamism and social integration: on the whole, the length of the working day was reduced and real wages increased for workers in the leading industrial countries. But unemployment remained an unrelenting burden, especially at times of crisis. (Beaud, 2002, p. 207)

Social Democracy, and the Golden Age of Work: 1944-1970

The period following the Second World War was not as disastrous on national and global economies as the First World War had been. Despite the massive level of debt experienced by many countries, economic and social security was generated by agreements like the Marshal Plan, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that served to increase manufacturing, and trade by injecting money into state economies and reducing trade tariffs and barriers. These economic incentives were made more possible thanks to the lending abilities of international lending agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank that were created at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference. The goal of these economic initiatives was clear: to generate high employment, wages, and standards of living by promoting international trade, cooperation, and capital investments. The effect of these initiatives was evident, writes Frieden, from the blossoming world trade in the 1950's as "exports grew more than twice as rapidly as the economy" (2006, p. 289).

> By 1953 output per person in every Western European country, and in Japan, was above 1938 levels and rising fast. The three biggest economies, Britain, France, and Germany, had by 1951 – six years after the war ended – surpassed their record of recovery during the entire period from the end of World War 1 through the Depression of the 1930s. (Frieden, 2006, p. 269)

The effect of this international trade and investment, argues Frieden, allowed industrial countries to extend a greater share of GDP to their public sector (2006, p. 297). This strengthened public sector allowed for the provision of a stronger welfare state that ensured higher rates of employment, education, and standards of living.

> While business prospered, the working classes also did very well. One-third to two-thirds of the labour force was in unions, and parties of the Left were in power more often than not. Government politics softened the swings of the business cycle; expansions were more than

> twice as long, recessions barely half as long, as during the gold standard [1879-1914]. Unemployment average just 3per cent in the main OECD countries, compared to 5 per cent during the gold standard and 8 per cent in the interwar years. (Frieden, 2006, p. 299)

This new standard of growth and stability ushered in an increase in infrastructure, urbanisation, consumption, that helped to stimulate local workforces. One of the most important factors for stabilising local economies, and securing the working relationship was the "generalisation of credit use, not only for home mortgages, but for buying cars and durable goods" (Beaud, 2002, p. 222). This normalisation of credit use proved to be a valuable tool for stimulating national economies, and in turn providing better standards of life for citizens, and security for workers.

Australia also enjoyed a period of growth, stability and security during this era. Overall, its population almost doubled, and economic activity increased more than threefold (Macintyre, 2009, p. 200). The government invested heavily into the advancement of worker skillsets by establishing the Australian National University, as well as a host of technical schools to help returning ex-servicemen get back into the workforce (Macintyre, 2009, p. 202). The government also invested in the construction of over 200, 000 homes between 1945-1949 to help stabilise and support these returning servicemen and the influx of new immigrants after the Second World War (Macintyre, 2009, p. 202). In addition to the support of returning military personnel the Australian government extended assistance to homebuyers, tax rebates for dependent spouses, pensions, and subsidies for private medical insurance (Macintyre, 2009, p. 209). This economic and social investment had excellent results, invigorating the Australian workforce. In 1948 the trade unions won the right to a 40 hour week for all Australians, and three weeks of paid annual leave was soon to follow (Macintyre, 2009, p. 220). Trade union membership reached a high of 60 per cent of the labour force by 1951 (Bramble, 2008, p. 7), and the proportion of women in paid employment doubled "from 20 per cent at the end of World War II to more than 40 per cent by the end of the 1960s" (Bramble, 2008, p. 24). Moreover, while (white) Australian history was rarely kind to its Indigenous population, in 1962 all Indigenous Australians were given the right to vote, which marked a step towards (more) equitable rights, and wages for Indigenous workers.

Overall, a golden age of security and stability unfolded for Australia, and much of the Global North during this era. While events like the Cold and Vietnam wars highlighted the (communist) threat to political security at the time, it only served to illustrate the economic, and social benefits and standards at the time. While the sexual revolution, civil rights movements, and punk rock began to emerge in the 1960s (although it did not become culturally distinct until the 1970s) to criticise

political ideologies, the security and living standards enjoyed by the average Australian worker were unrivalled during this era as average real weekly earnings increased by more than 50 per cent between 1945 and 1965 (Macintyre, 2009, p. 220), and home ownership rose from 53 per cent to 70 per cent between 1947 and 1961 to become among the highest in the world (Macintyre, 2009, p. 221). Thus, this post-war era was one in which work can be considered to be secure in the sense that it offered workers not only consistent employment, but also good social rewards for working. It was a period of relative work security because workers experienced more than just economic stability, but because the role, and status, of work to socialise workers and provide them with the means to overcome adversity in this era was unique. Harvey (2005, p. 15) characterises this time as one in which a "social compromise between capital and labour" was formed. He gives an example from the United States where "the share of the nation income taken by the top 1 per cent of income earners fell from a pre-war high of 16 per cent to less than 8 per cent by the end of the Second World War, and stayed close to that level for nearly three decades" (Harvey, 2005, p. 15). Here the more equitable share of wealth suggests a more equitable share of social resources between various income groups across the United States.

The Neoliberal Transformation of Work: 1971-Present

The beginning of the 1970s ushered a shift in economic policy from many countries around the world from its socially democratic form in the previous era. While the shift proved beneficial for extending rates of profit for companies, it resulted in a decreasing share of wages to company profits which resulted in growing wealth and social inequality throughout the era. Central to this present era, is the experience of worker insecurity that emerges as workers struggle to secure (or compete) for social resources with more wealthy members of society.

In 1973, Bell famously identified a shift from an industrial to a post-industrial era of society. This new formation of society, he argues, emerges from a significant shift in national investment from manufacturing industries to the service industries. It is a concept that: "emphasises the centrality of theoretical knowledge as the axis around which new technology, economic growth and the stratification of society will be organized" (Bell, 1973, p. 180). As detailed in table 1 (below) this post-industrial era designates an expansion of 'abstract theories' and 'systems analysis' to centralise and codify information, knowledge, and data in contrast to the previous (industrial) era's focus on manufacturing and processing.

	Pre-Industrial	Industrial	Post-Industrial	
Regions	Asia, Africa, Latin America	Western Europe, Soviet Union, Japan	United States	
Economic Sector	Primary Extractive: Agriculture, Mining, Fishing, Timber	Secondary Goods Producing: Manufacturing, Processing	Tertiary: Transportation, Utilities	Quaternary: Trade, Finance, Insurance, Real Estate
			Quinary: Health, Education, Research, Government, Recreation	
Occupational Slope	Farmer, Miner, Fisherman, Unskilled Worker	Semi-skilled worker, Engineer	Professional and Technical Scientists	
Technology	Raw Minerals	Energy	Information	
Design	Game against Nature	Game against Fabricated Nature	Game between Persons	
Time Perspective	Orientation to the past Ad hoc responses	Ad hoc Adaptiveness Projections	Future Orientation Forecasting	
Axial Principle	Traditionalism: Land/resource Limitation	Economic Growth: State or Private Control of Investment decisions	Centrality of, and Codification of Theoretical Knowledge.	

Table 1: A comparison of pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial economies (reproduced from Bell, 1973, p. 185).

While Bell's argument was largely empirical in its description of this post-industrial shift, his analysis has been used in recent times to underscore, and pinpoint the social and political transformations of society that have accompanied this shift in economic policy and investment (Harvey, 2005; Birch & Mykhnenko, 2010; Graeber, 2011). One common argument here is that the mobilisation of capital into the service industries allowed wealthy nations (i.e. Britain, the United States) to take advantage of production opportunities in low wage labour markets in the Global South. Graeber, for instance, traced this mobilisation of capital to the dissolution of the Bretton Woods agreement in 1971, which he argued initiated a "regime of free-floating currencies that continues to this day" (Graeber, 2011, p. 361). The termination of the Bretton Woods agreement allowed a "massive net transfer of wealth from poor countries, which lacked gold reserves, to rich ones, like the United States and Great Britain" (Graeber, 2011, p. 362). The effect of this

mobilisation of capital had drastic effects for the security of labour forces all around the world who were suddenly subject to inflationary global exchange rates.

> Governments had to mould domestic policies to fit the exchange rate, to sacrifice national goals in order to sustain a currency's international value. There was no secret about how to do this: if domestic process rose to make a currency "overvalued", they needed to be brought back down by raising interest rates, cutting government spending, reducing consumption. (Frieden, 2006, p. 346)

To stimulate their national economies, then, the heads of governments in China, Britain, and the United States began to systematically deregulate and privatise national assets in the hope of stimulating private sector growth, production, and mitigating against public responsibility. This stimulation of the private sector was aided by deficit spending throughout the early 1980s in which nations all around the world began to accumulate national deficits (Frieden, 2006, pp. 378-379). Despite the issues that might have otherwise mounted onto national industry and workforces, the growth of the world financial market in the 1980s made deficit financing much easier and less catastrophic to 'established' economies. Organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank easily allowed credits to flow easily from one country to another which allowed the international trading market to expand greatly. Frieden reports that "by the early 1980s international capital markets were about ten times larger, at $1.5 trillion, and international lending was about $300 billion a year (Frieden, 2006, p. 381). While the effect of this growth helped to stimulate the growth of the service sectors in many nations in the Global North, much of the profits went to individual owners and CEOs, rather than the workforce itself.

In the Global South, the impact of international financing was even more catastrophic for the stability and security of local workforces. While global financial prosperity may have served to stabilise the inflation in the Global North it often resulted in enormous budget deficits that were problematic to more vulnerable countries. Beaud reports that between 1965 and 1977 "the current debts of the developing countries rose from $40 billion…to $260 billion" (Beaud, 2002, p. 248). The impact of these debts on developing countries resulted in numerous social crisis as countries had to adopt austerity measures to avoid sinking further in debt. The effects of austerity measures on the Global South has been discussed in much detail in recent times, particularly with regards to its ability to shape society (see Hardt & Negri, 2000; Harvey, 2005; Graeber, 2011; Lazzarato, 2011). Fundamental to these accounts is the instrumental manner in which debts, and more specifically the imposition of debt relief by international funding bodies like the IMF or the World

Bank serve to push 'neoliberal institutional reforms' onto indebted countries (Harvey, 2005). Harvey claims the "peso crisis in Mexico in 1995, the Brazilian crisis of 1998, and the total collapse of the Argentine economy in 2001" are all predictable results of these imperialistic policies that were "hostile to all forms of social solidarity that put restraints on capital accumulation" (Harvey, 2005, p. 75). The ensuing degradation of institutions designed to restrain capital accumulation meant that global market insecurity could spread both nationally and internationally as insecurity mobilised across socio-economic barriers (Harvey, 2005, p. 25).

Like much of the world, Australia too felt the brunt of rising inequality in the 1970s and 1980s. The oil embargo by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (or OPEC) who, by the early 1970s, controlled nearly half the world's oil reserves (Frieden, 2006, p. 365) hit Australia like much of the world with stagnating production and high inflation rates. While the Whitlam Government attempted to inflate wages by increasing public spending, its "reliance on commodity exports made it increasingly uncompetitive in a global economic dominated by advanced manufactures and service industries", the result was mass unemployment (Macintyre, 2009, p. 245). Despite these hardships, the Australian economy managed to maintain production by increasing production of raw minerals like coal, oil, gas, and uranium of which it had plenty. Nevertheless, while the mining industry was profitable for business owners, it did little to increase employment rates and wages for Australian workers because of the industry's reliance on technologically heavy skillsets. Thus, despite the mining boom in Australia (which stimulated capital growth), the Australian labour force received an unequal proportion of these economic gains as unemployment reached over 10 per cent by the early 1980s (Macintyre, 2009, p. 248). This separation of capital gains from labour gains sets the foundations for the emergence of precarity and insecurity that is experienced, today. As this wealth inequality expands throughout Australian society over the coming decades, so too does the role of work as a social institution change as workers become more insecure about their prospects in the Australian workforce, and are less able to compete with the owners of capital for social resources.

To stabilise the Australian economy (and increase security for workers), the Government, in negotiation with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), instituted a labour Accord in 1983. The Accord was an agreement between the trade unions and the Government that in exchange for wage restraint from the unions, employers would "return to the system of centralised wage fixation" (Macintyre, 2009, p. 248). Macintyre reports that "as an employment strategy, the Accord worked" (2009, p. 248).

> One and a half million new jobs were created during the remainder of the decade and the jobless rate fell back from over 10 per cent in 1983 to just over 6 per cent in 1989. (Macintyre, 2009, p. 248)

Nevertheless, Macintyre adds that, alongside fixing wages the Government floated the Australian dollar (AUD) in 1983 allowing foreign banks to compete with domestic banks as the value of the AUD was set by the global market. While this meant that some industries could profit more freely from international trade and investment, it meant that Australian society suffered from further rising inequalities between the owners of capital and their employees. Macintyre writes:

> With financial deregulation, Australia's economic performance was subjected to the fickle judgement of international currency traders. With the rapid increase of overseas borrowing and a persistent trade deficit, the dollar lost 40 per cent of its value by 1986. By this time the net foreign debt, about half of it public borrowing and half private, represented 30 per cent of the national product, and every new fall in the exchange rate increased its cost. (Macintyre, 2009, p. 249)

Ultimately the labour Accord proved to be a backwards step for the security of Australian workers. Bramble reports that "real wages fell" during this period despite the sustained economic growth, and that the 'wages share of GDP contracted sharply as the profit share bounced back" (Bramble, 2008, p. 125). Macintyre agrees that this period saw the gradual polarisation of the rich and the poor in Australia thanks to the erosion of public welfare systems, and the separation of economies from national wage regulations, and thus the deregulation of capital as profits went to investors rather than labour (Macintyre, 2009, p. 254). In figure 6, below, Bramble shows the proportion of award wages[1] in comparison to salaried wages once a CPI is applied.

[1] In Australia the award wage refers to the minimum wage entitlement to a worker. While award rates can vary across industries, and change depending on age, experience, job type, and enterprise agreement the 'award rate' generally refers to the minimum legal wage for an adult (at least 21 years old) worker on a casual contract (i.e. no permanent hours of employment) in Australia.

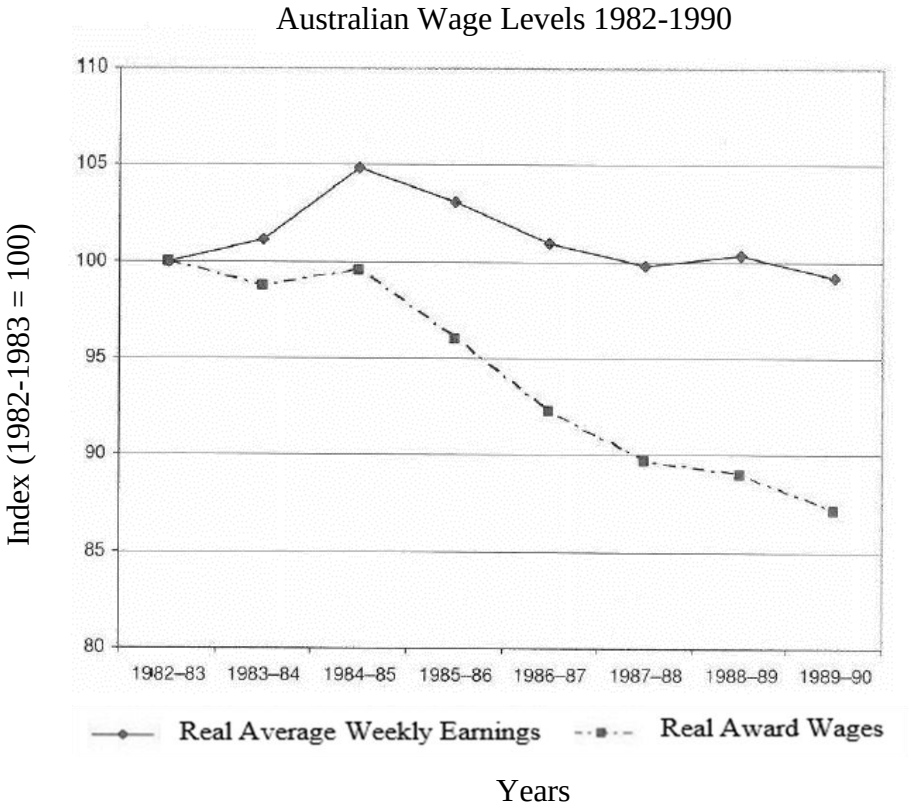

Figure 6: Comparison of 'real average weekly earnings' and 'real award wages' from 1982-1990 (Bramble, 2008: 139). Note that figures are deflated by CPI by the author to arrive at 'real earnings'.

In the graph above we see a distinct separation of salaried, full time employees from the casual, and part-time employees whose 'award' wages were set around and increasing unsecured, unstable employment. "Between 1982 and 1994" writes Macintyre "the top 10 per cent of income earners enjoyed an increase of $100 a week, and the bottom 10 per cent (assisted by Labor's[2] welfare spending) gained $11 a week, but the 80 per cent in between suffered a decline (Macintyre, 2009, p. 263). This social inequality only got worse, as 1.5 million Australian workers on income support in 1990 became 2.6 million by the turn of the century, the equivalent of 20 per cent of the workforce (Macintyre, 2009, p. 265).

Central to this division of wealth is the emergence of a class of workers (often deemed 'middle Australians') who were victimised by enterprise bargaining agreements that dictated employment conditions across Australian workplaces. Enterprise bargaining was (ironically) viewed by many unions as key to liberating the workers from strenuous employment conditions. Tom McDonald, the

[2] The Labor Party is the Australian political party that was in power at the time.

leader of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) in 1995, who was in favour of enterprise bargaining was quoted as saying:

> The long-term aim of workplace bargaining is to develop a new workplace culture based on flexibility, cooperation and democracy and the win/win principle of mutual benefits. (as cited in Bramble, 2008, p. 166)

Unsurprisingly, the outcome of enterprise bargaining rarely fell in favour of individual workers. Bramble explains that "In order to make extended working hours and weekend work financially viable, employers used enterprise bargaining to cut penalty rates and shift loadings" (2008, p. 166). He gives some figures:

> The most significant change resulting from enterprise bargaining involved ceding power to employers to determine working hours and the allocation of labour. Eighty per cent of companies reported that they had changed hours of work. This involved extending daily 'ordinary hours' within which no penalty rates applied, the introduction of 24-hour operations, and a lengthening of the working day. At Alcoa, continuous shift work was introduced and the working week extended from 38 to 42 hours. At Richmond Council in Melbourne, the working day was extended from 7.2 hours to 7.7 hours in exchange for a one-off lump sum payment. In many enterprises, employers were now able to bank rostered days off, allowing workers to take them only in quieter times of operation rather than on a scheduled basis. At Australia Post, the 1994 agreement offered shift workers the 'right' to sell back their extra one-week leave entitlement, thereby diluting award provisions for annual leave. (Bramble, 2008, p. 166)

The effect of enterprise bargaining, and the support it got from unions led workers to lose faith in trade unions and union membership steadily declined over the decades (see Figure 1 in Chapter One). The role of the State and political parties in the transformation of employment relations led to a process of decentralisation with regards to enterprise bargaining process. This decentralisation of enterprise bargaining, and the weakening employment protection laws have been frequently attributed to the decline in union membership during this era (Kelly, 2015, p. 4). Subsequently enterprise bargaining had essentially rendered obsolete any residual laws to enforce a "standard five-day, 37-hour week" for the Australian labour force (Bramble, 2008, p. 199). It meant that:

> …penalty rates were cashed out to allow much greater shift work and weekend work, clauses limiting the use of part-time and casual work were abolished, and 152-hour 'months' were introduced allowing employers to vary the working week almost at will. Work classifications were collapsed, and 'agency agreements' in the public service undermined the ability of unions to mobilise 'all-in' campaigns. (Bramble, 2008, p. 199)

The diminishing power of the trade unions in Australia coincides with an increasing separation of wealth. In table 2, Bramble demonstrates how the share of total household disposable income and the average real household disposable incomes have declined for four of the income quintiles in Australia between 1984 and 1994.

Income Quintile	Share of Total Household Disposable Income (per cent)		Average Real Household Disposable Incomes (1993-1994 prices) ($)		Change In Real Household Disposable Incomes (per cent)
	1984	**1994**	**1984**	**1994**	**1984-1994**
Lowest	6.3	5.8	192.13	174.82	-9.0
Second	12.1	11.4	365.67	340.07	-7.0
Third	17.9	17.4	543.27	517.77	-4.7
Fourth	24.8	25.0	751.37	745.77	-0.7
Highest	38.8	40.4	1176.68	1205.46	+2.5
TOTAL	**100.0**	**100.0**	**605.54**	**596.84**	**-1.4**

Table 2: A comparison of 'total household disposable income' and 'average real household disposable incomes' from 1984-1994 (reproduced from Bramble, 2008, p. 179).

By the end of the 20th century, there was a distinct trend in Australia in which the rich were getting richer, and the poor were getting poorer. While unemployment returned to over 10 per cent in 1992 (Macintyre, 2009, p. 251), it was juxtaposed against a stable, and healthy 3.7 per cent average annual growth rate of production throughout the 90s (Macintyre, 2009, p. 290). This broadening gap of wealth among the Australian population reflected global patterns typified by the inauguration of global trade agreements to promote the mobility of global capital. The birth of the European Union

and other trading blocs like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the Southern Common Market facilitated global investment in capital, but also global implementation of non-standard forms of employment (NSFE) to supplement the mobility of these investments. In Australia:

> There was a substantial increase in employment of more than 650 000 between 1993 and 1996, but more than one-third of these jobs were part-time. For those with full-time jobs, work was just getting harder with longer hours. By 1996, workers were working the equivalent of four more weeks over the course of the year when compared to 1983. (Bramble, 2008, p. 179)

Similar trends are documented in research from Doogan (2009) and Beck (2000) who detail these shifts in European and North American contexts. Edgell (2012) argues that the transformation of work emerged during this era in the form of de-standardisation. Edgell argues that the rise of NSFE can be explained in four distinct organisational shifts in workplace management. The first notable shift emerges through the rise of temporary, part-time, and self-employment occupations that results in a reorganisation of the employee contract (2012, p. 146). Second, he argues that changes to the social perception of space as facilitated by the increase in technology denotes a de-standardisation of work-space (2012, p. 146). A classic example of such de-standardisation is given by the facilitation of workers to log-in to work remotely or to travel — with much more efficiency — from one work site to another across the world (see also, Sennett, 1998; Bauman, 2001; Castells, 2010). Third, the attachment of *time* in work appears to have been de-standardised in the event of 'flexitime' practices, and — again — in the event of mobile technology that allows employees to work remotely and track and log worker motion (Edgell, 2012: 147; see also Rubery, 2005; Moore & Robinson, 2016). Finally, Edgell suggests that a transformation of gender dynamics means that work is much more likely to break from the typical patriarchal confines of the industrial system and be more inclusive of women (Edgell, 2012, p. 147). While gender equality is still far from being achieved in the domain of work, Edgell argues that the emergence of the dual earning household and the variable house worker has improved the social status of women in workplaces. While women still face inequalities in the workplace there is undoubtedly more flexibility and diversity in work and family arrangements (Edgell, 2012, p. 148).

Harvey identifies the role of NSFE as an essential element of the neoliberal shift around the globe since the 1970s. He argues that NSFE is essential to the neoliberal redistribution of wealth from

state reserves to private pockets as CEOs take on powers that few normal citizens possess (Harvey, 2005, p. 160). He says:

> Such trends are readily discernible in all states that have taken the neoliberal road. Given the violent assault on all forms of labour organization and labour rights and heavy reliance upon massive but largely disorganized labour reserves in countries such as China, Indonesia, India, Mexico, and Bangladesh it would seem that labour control and maintenance of a high rate of labour exploitation have been central to neoliberalisation all along. (Harvey, 2005, p. 76)

While Doogan acknowledges the role of neoliberalism in the transformation of work, he is quick to point out the significance of the increase of job stability in "many sectors of the advanced economies" (2009, p. 4). That many economies are generating large numbers of jobs suggests that the transformation of work is not one of job supply, but rather the quality of exploitation in work. The transformation of work in contemporary times, he argues, ought to be distinguished from "job stability (represented by the length of job tenure)", and focused towards "job security, which is taken to mean the general sense of confidence in employment economic circumstances" (Doogan, 2009, p. 170). Certainly, the trends throughout Australia in the 1990s suggest a similar conclusion: that while employment opportunities for workers are increasing with the creation of new jobs and industries, the quality, and reward, of employment is not.

In 2005, the share of power and security held by the Australian worker hit a low-point after the Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard, implemented the "Work Choices Act". The Work Choices Act was designed to centralise Australian industrial relations laws and stimulate employment and economic performance. The Act however, "intensified the trend under way since the late 1980s of employers seizing greater control over the number and scheduling of hours worked by employees" (Bramble, 2008, p. 215). Bramble argues that "one-third of all workers surveyed in a major study of Work Choices agreements experienced a reduction in their real pay at the same time as their hours remained the same or increased" (Bramble, 2008, p. 215).

> In a sample of 998 AWAs (Australian Workplace Agreements) lodged between May and October 2006, the Government's own Workplace Authority (the re-badged Office of the Employment Advocate) found that the majority lacked penalty rates for work in unsocial hours, shift loadings, overtime loadings, public holiday payment, and annual leave loadings. Thirty per cent made no reference to rest breaks, one-quarter did not include declared public

> holidays, and one-third made no provision for wage increases during the life of the agreement. One in six removed all award conditions, replacing them with only the Government's five minimum items. Rates of pay were systematically lower for most workers on AWAs as compared to those on enterprise agreements. In one-half of cases, workers on AWAs reported that they had had no opportunity to negotiate their content. (Bramble, 2008, p. 214)

The overwhelming research that illustrates the problematic legislation of Work Choices was not lost on the Australian public, and Howard lost the following election and the Work Choice Act was defeated. However, the effects of the Act has already done tremendous damage to the Australian workforce who had lost confidence in the ability of work to provide a stable and secure social existence for Australian workers. Bramble explains that perhaps one of the greatest problems caused by the Work Choices Act was in furthering the separation of the profits of labour from the Australian workforce.

> By 2005, the income share of the richest 10 per cent of the population was higher than at any time since 1949. The wages share of GDP reached a 37-year low and the profit share a record high. The disparity between workers and the super-rich became more extreme. In 1992, the remuneration of the typical executive in one of Australia's top 50 companies was 27 times the wage of the average worker. Ten years later the multiple had risen to 98. Work Choices widened the gap still further. While average weekend earning rose by only 3 per cent (in nominal terms) in the first year of Work Choices, total annual compensation for choice executives rose by 30 per cent. (Bramble, 2008, p. 234)

The widening gap between workers and capitalists in Australia set the scene for the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis. While Australia's economy fared better than others (The Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010), the Global Financial Crisis helped to exacerbate the awareness of global precarity, worker insecurity, and the pervasiveness of wealth inequality between wage and capital growth. Thus, while economically the impact of the Global Financial Crisis was not too severe, it served to elevate fear, uncertainty, and insecurity amongst the Australian workforce.

Today, as outlined in Chapter One, Australian workers find themselves in a familiar historical situation with declining confidence in employment conditions, as well as a growing distrust in the ability of work to provide social security. Real wages have declined into negative territory when compared with CPI, household debt is 190 per cent of household income, union membership covers

a record low of 14.8 per cent of the labour force, and productivity is rising steadily each year. These statistics demonstrate the issue of job insecurity as one that is concerned with more than job stability, and job tenure. The issue facing Australian workers, and workers in many others parts of the world is that work — as a social institution — is losing its ability to provide value to workers. That is to say that social security, status, and stability are not guaranteed through the social process of working. Certainly the case in Australia is not yet as bad as in other countries where people can be working full time, and still living below the poverty line (Torraco, 2016), however, such a reality has become the fear of insecure workers who are no longer convinced that their work will continue to provide the social security and stability in the future. Deranty's concept of the 'precarisation' of existence in contemporary work emerges from this fear; it is not a fear of suffering, he emphasises, but rather a "fear of not coping with suffering" (Deranty, 2008, p. 449). That is to say the fear is of the future inability of work to guarantee social security for the worker against unknown potential hardships. Such a point emphasises the social and political issue of job insecurity that Gallie et al. (2016), and Doogan (2009) emphasise at the beginning of this chapter when they argue that the issue of job insecurity is an issue concerning the security of the social *status* of employment, rather than the stability or ongoing tenure of employment.

Conclusion: The Precarious Transformation of Work

The emerging theme in this chapter has been the transformation of work as capital and labour become *synonymous* around the world. That is to say, that despite concerns from Marx and Marxists that capitalism would continue to appropriate and objectify workers to create clear divisions and class consciousness, we find ourselves in an era in which work and capitalism are ubiquitous. This conflation is problematic because it means that capitalism is not just an economic prerogative, but that it invades every part of social life as workers shape their identity, values, and experiences around capitalistic ideology. Consequently, while the systematic disintegration of employee protection laws and regulations, alongside the privatisation of social welfare systems since the 1970s, has left national workforces more precariously positioned to greedy profiteering on global capitalists, it has also left workers with insecure conceptions about their social future. We are in an era in which there appears to be no valid alternative to capitalist society. As Kalleberg (2009, p. 5) points out, the common discreditation of theories (like Marxism) that once conceptualised a world without market domination has left us in an "ideological vacuum".

A defining feature of this chapter has been the growing separation of profits from workers in favour of capitalists. This means that while capital and work become synonymous, the gap between

capitalists and workers grows wider. The problem emerges where workers are more reliant on work for social security than ever, but that the rewards for working appear to be diminishing for these same workers. This widening gap is clearly demonstrated in the chapter by the diminishing returns of real wages for workers despite ongoing national economic growth. Such a division reflect the common proverb that: 'the rich get richer and the poor get poorer'. It is within this segregation of workers from the benefits of work that conceptualisations of job insecurity, and precarious work emerge chiefly, as Kalleberg suggests, as employment becomes unpredictable and risky from the "point of view of the worker" (2009, p. 2).

This chapter demonstrates three aspects of working life that have been transformed for workers in recent times, each of which contributes to the overarching internalisation of fear, anxiety, and insecurity of workers. First, I demonstrate that work offers fewer benefits for workers than before. This is demonstrated through both the diminishing share of real wages in comparison to company profits over time, which results in workers struggling to compete for social resources alongside company executives and managers who have substantially larger pay-packages. Second, the de-regulation of worker contracts and hours, and the rise of company specific enterprise bargaining has impacted the predictability and reliability of workplaces to secure working conditions and relationships with workers. As illustrated by Bramble (2008) throughout this chapter, the history of enterprise bargaining for Australian workers has rarely been kind to the employees who are frequently forced to work harder, for lower wages. Third, I have demonstrated the decline in unionisation over time in Australia (although this trend is persistent globally, see The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018). These three factors suggest that the experience of job insecurity is increasing. It suggests that workers receive fewer benefits for working, they are responsible for, and thus less protected from economic shifts in the market, and they are less likely to unionise. Thus, insecurity emerges through the steady separation of wealth from capitalists and labourers since the industrial era. While it begins as an economic issue, insecurity is a social and political problem in which workers fear the loss of the status of work as work is less and less capable to secure workers social standing. As Gallie et al. (2016, p. 2) suggest at the beginning of this chapter, job insecurity is more than a fear of the loss of work it refers to the "anxiety about threat to job status". While anxiety is often attributed to a personal, psychological issue, this particular anxiety over work insecurity can be traced to the systematic separation of wealth from labour since the industrial era that has accelerated since the 1970s. This most recent neoliberal transformation of work raises issues for workers around the world as work becomes not just less permanent, but also less likely to offer social benefits.

This intimate relationship between capital and life in the 21st century plays a vital role for the conceptualisation of research in this thesis as I examine the social and political effects of this systematic insecurity across cohorts of workers in an Australian setting. Already there is a growing body of literature and research to suggest deviance in the workplace is just as abundant as it has ever been (see Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Collinson, 2003; Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Thomas & Davies, 2005; McCabe, 2007; Korczynski, 2011). While the cause of this is debated, the following chapter attempts to conceptualise it as a response to insecurity at work. This concept will be formulated through Jacques Derrida's (1995) concept of responsibility in which I apply Derrida's deconstructive method for assessing subjectivity by assessing its obligations to otherness. By assessing the obligations of workers who are subject to precarious working environments, my thesis hopes to illustrate the political nature of deviant workers by focusing on the mutual, and collective benefits of deviance for these workers.

Chapter 3: Responses to Insecurity

Despite the widespread growth of insecurity, and the global decline in trade union membership, many researchers have presented evidence to suggest workers are misbehaving and challenging the organisation of their workplace (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Collinson, 2003; McCabe, 2007; Korczynski, 2011). However, while there are numerous accounts of deviance, misbehaviour, and even 'resistance' to work, the potential for these actions to shape political and economic power are in doubt. More specifically, criticisms have emerged as to the individualised nature of resistance, or more precisely deviance, that appears to "reproduce rather than challenge" power at work (McCabe, 2007, p. xiii). The concern is that while workers find ways to deviate from managerial protocols at work, they nevertheless, still reproduce their mandatory workloads and contribute to the economic production of labour. Contu (2008, p. 376) describes this issue as one of 'decaf resistance', whereby 'resistant' acts do not radically change the economy of the workplace but instead fall victim to a form of "discursive identity politics" that isolates individuals from their political economy. As a result, the response of workers to precarious work is often contested; while there are signs that workers are 'taking matters into their own hands' and challenging the authority of management, there is a considerable concern that workers are unable to address the systematic, and powerful, mechanisms of contemporary (neoliberal) capitalism on their own.

The aim of this chapter is to conceptualise deviance and misbehaviour as a response to precarious and insecure work. Herein I will only use the concept of 'deviance' rather than misbehaviour, however, I understand the concept of deviance to be consistent with Ackroyd and Thompson's conceptualisation of misbehaviour which they define as "anything you do at work you are not supposed to do" (1999, p. 2). This chapter intends to bridge the conceptual gap between individual worker deviance and a more socio-political form of resistance by creating a methodological framework that can be operationalised in the research of precarious workers in later chapters. This framework aims to investigate shared or collective forms of responsibility that emerge across cohorts of workers, and will inform the collection of, and analysis of data in later chapters.

The concept of responsibility developed in this chapter follows Jacques Derrida's (1995) conceptualisation of responsibility which he argues is a product of intersubjectivity. That is, Derrida suggests that responsibility is about being obliged to something other than one's self. Derrida's (1995) conceptualisation of responsibility is valuable because it views the individual subject and the politically responsible subject as the same entity and thus provides the possibility for political change through the organisation of workers around specific responsibilities to each other at work. This methodological view is useful to research into worker responses to insecurity because it provides a platform in which individual organisational schemas may be linked to wider socio-

political interactions in a worksite. I will also draw from Newman (2001, 2010) who points out that Derrida's poststructuralism echoes a largely anti-authoritarian and decentralised philosophy that resonates with Anarchist philosophy. Such Anarchist philosophy offers a valuable, and radical, political schema for the analysis of deviance in this research. This anarchistic dimension is essential to understanding resistant processes of precarious workers, I will argue, because it resonates with the re-emergence of anarchistic philosophies in contemporary anti-neoliberalism protest movements (Shukaitis, 2013; Graeber, 2011; Scott, 2012). Thus, I will argue that an anarchistic conceptualisation of a decentralised, and non-authoritarian power relations is essential to understanding the motivations of deviant workers in precarious scenarios.

Ultimately, this chapter aims to conceptualise the ability of workers to respond to precarious working conditions. This analysis of the ability-to-respond is conceptualised through my framework of *responsibility* in which I seek to understand the mechanisms through which workers interact, learn from, react to, and hopefully even challenge, work. By focusing on this concept of worker responsibility, this chapter details a praxis in which to view resistance as an active, and interactive social experience of workers, rather than a practice that begins and ends with the individual worker. Such conceptual framework will be essential to challenging the problem of resistance and identity politics that leads to a narrative of the passive, neoliberal worker.

The Problem of Resistance: What are Workers Resisting?

Achieving a clear understanding of the ways in which workers respond to precarity and insecurity has been difficult, possibly because of the somewhat ambiguous nature of precarity. Armano, Bove, and Murgia (2017, p. 1) for instance, argue that "reconstructing the fragmented history of the concept of precariousness is not a straightforward task" largely because of its wide, and varied use throughout history as it emerges in different circumstances from the writings of Marx to Weber's work, and emerges in different forms in social movements in the 1960s like the Italian women's movement. Shukaitis (2013) adds to this critical inquiry into 'precarious work' when he argues that because precarity refers to a lack of coherence amongst workers, it fails to mobilise and express any specific value about its subject (2013, p. 657). The problem emerges, Shukaitis explains, when precarity can affect workers differently; it can both be "beautiful, an escape from the factory, and horrible, in the conditions of intensifying neoliberal globalisation and destruction of social welfare programs (2013, p. 658)". "Sometimes", says Shukaitis, precarity "plays out in productive ways, and at other times risks emptying the concept of meaning through being too open, too undetermined" (2013, p. 642). He argues that "precarity is not just a question of the changing composition of labour, but of experimenting with modes of being and community that are not determined by labour" (2013, p. 658). He explains:

> The meaning of precarity is not determined by a set of criteria that define it, and thus can be operationalised as tools of research (or at least solely as them). Rather it is a political tool whose meaning is shaped by the context from which it emerges, the composition of labour and politics in which it is utilised. (Shukaitis, 2013, p. 657)

As such, Shukaitis raises an integral issue with the conceptualisation of, and operationalisation, of precarity in current research — that insecurity affects workers differently. Such a realisation has been key to many theoretical and empirical studies performed on "resistance in contemporary workplaces" which have become critical of Marxist 'grand narratives' of resistance in workplace struggles (Kondo, 1990; Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Collinson, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005; McCabe, 2007; Korczynski, 2011). In one of the most compelling contributions, Ackroyd and Thompson object to claims that contemporary management has successfully negotiated the 'last frontier of control' to subdue workers around the world (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999, p. 5). They argue that 'new forms of misbehaviour' are being innovated all the time (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999, p. 6), and that "politics cannot repeat and reproduce past patterns of relationships between informal and formal organisation" (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999, p. 163). Instead politics — as the reproduction of power — must be adapted to new scenarios, mechanisms, economies and possibilities all the time. While they are careful to welcome critical labour theory's contributions to literature, Ackroyd and Thompson are critical of the Marxist grand narrative of 'resistance vs control'. They mount this critique against labour process theorists like Braverman (1974), Friedman, (1977) and Edwards (1979) who they argue have:

> …elaborated a politics of production in which workers' struggles are part of the process of producing a series of dominant factory regimes. Such frameworks are flawed by their over-ambitious attempts to create overarching models which explain the sequence or central characteristics of periods of capitalist production…nor is it accurate to define all the observed employee motives and practices by using the concept of resistance to control, or to judge its effectiveness primarily through the degree of formal, collective action achieved by workers. (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999, p 23)

In short, Ackroyd and Thompson utilise the concept of 'organisational misbehaviour' as an empirical tool to help understand the behaviour of workers who do anything "at work you are not supposed to do" (1999, p. 2). This methodological step is essential to their work, and indeed much of the literature on resistance since the turn of the 21st century, because

> Old-style work limitation or other things that employers like to call 'Spanish practices' may not be appropriate or feasible in new conditions [of work]. But as we have demonstrated, modified forms of self-organisation remain the bedrock of employee action and the resource on which more formal and solidarity behaviour rests, however indirectly. (Ackroyd & Thompson 1999, p. 163)

By calling for a renewed interest in researching patterns of deviance as a mechanism to understand contemporary responses to power in the workplace, Ackroyd and Thompson perform a kind of deconstruction of organisational behaviour. This deconstruction emerges through the manner in which they contrast the emergence of alternative patterns of organisation by misbehaving workers to better understand the overall narrative of organisational behaviour. This deconstruction serves to create a richer understanding of organisational behaviour as a whole by pointing to the role of deviance as a mechanism for challenging, redirecting, and shaping organisational culture and behaviour. Thus, through this more deconstructive approach to organisational behaviour, Ackroyd and Thompson foster an interest in the deviant, self-organisation of workers (as opposed to more collective, formal unionised organisation) led to a mass of research into informal organisational behaviour.

Collinson (2003), contributes to this organisational impact on alternate forms of (mis)behaviour by highlighting the role that insecurity plays in shaping 'power-relations and survival strategies' and, more generally, *subjectivity*. Here Collinson argues for a more diverse conceptualisation of subjectivity to recognise the extent of 'insecurity' produced by 'worker struggles' without reducing them to 'grand narratives' of resistance. Collinson warns against a conceptualisation of resistance as something that is 'pristine, or authentic' (2003). Instead he points towards the value of thinking of the construction of subjectivity and its insecurities as a mechanism to "enhance our understanding of the ways that organisational power relations are reproduced, rationalized, resisted and, just occasionally, even transformed" (2003, p. 345). He justifies this more poststructuralist approach to subjectivity by arguing:

> Insecurity in organizations can take many different, sometimes overlapping forms. It may, for example, be existential, social, economic and/or psychological. These multiple insecurities can intersect and operate simultaneously, thus reinforcing their impact on the construction of workplace selves and the reproduction of organizational power relations. Attempts to overcome these insecurities can also have unintended and contradictory outcomes. (Collinson, 2003, p. 530)

The advantage of this poststructuralist approach, Collinson suggests, is that it highlights the multiple possible responses subjectivity can have in all its ambiguity, discontinuity, and irrationality (2003, p. 534). Here he refers to Kondo's (1990) research on the formation of subjectivity and identity at work in which she argues that "selves are never fixed, coherent, seamless, bounded or whole; they are 'crafted selves' not least through contradiction and irony" (2003, p. 534). Several important projects followed this exploration of divergent identity, subjectivity, and the emergence of cynical, ironic, and satirical behaviour to highlight the manner in which deviant workers disrupted, challenged, and changed the nature of work (see Thomas & Davies, 2005; Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; McCabe, 2007; Korczynski, 2011). For instance, in their analysis of 'micro-resistances at work' Thomas and Davies highlight the actions of Kate — a personnel manager in the police service — who claims to respond and manipulate her job to suit her (2005, p. 691). By asserting her role, they argue, as a mother as a role that is consistent with, and not subordinate to, work Kate has challenged the (masculine) authority and hierarchy of her role in the police service. An excerpt from Kate's interview in Thomas and Davies research reads:

> …when they decided to start a meeting at three o'clock in the afternoon I wasn't scheduled to deliver my paper on it until half past five and this was with the senior, very senior people in the Force. And I thought this isn't on! I'm quite happy to stay late if something urgent happens and it's essential, you know I'll say "OK fine". But this was planned, and there's no reason for this, there's just no reason for this at all and I'm just not doing it. And it was the first time anybody had turned round and basically told the senior management that they don't do evenings, they have children to look after. (Thomas & Davies, 2005, p. 691)

By challenging the authority of the police force over her private life of motherhood, Kate — Thomas and Davies argue — displays the 'multidimensional' aspect of subjectivity. This multidimensional aspect highlights the ways through which Kate shifts her responsibility to different narratives to 're-situate' her subjectivity at work, and vicariously force work to re-organise around Kate.

Nevertheless, by virtue of her continued engagement in work, Kate is also seen to address, reproduce, and reaffirm aspects of the institution of which she criticises. Herein lies the problem with contemporary conceptualisations of resistance-at-work; namely that to 'resist-at-work', workers must therefore engage in the practice of 'work'. Korczynski (2011) comments on this paradox of resistance at work in his study of humour as a resistant aspect of subjectivity in

otherwise dominating 'Taylorised' factories. "This is humour with a smiling face but a savage meaning" says Korczynski (2011, p. 1431). "Humour was overwhelmingly resistive in nature" it served to bond workers together over the absurdity of their situation at work (Korczynski, 2011, p. 1431).

> For humour-use within 'routine humour', the actions were only funny if there was a shared intuited understanding on the shopfloor of the inherent lack of meaning in the repetitive labour process, that involved the same 'mindless' actions repeated many, many times each day, making blinds for people they will never know, in order to make money for people who treat them with little respect. (Korczynski, 2011, p. 1431)

Nevertheless, Korczynski points out that while humour served to inspire workers to question and criticise work it was also inherently tied to acts of labour; that work "this humour required the labour process to be functioning" (2011, p. 1431). The problem being one in which acts that could be deemed as being resistant at work do not resist work at all. Korczynski's concern is well founded argue Contu (2008) and Paulsen (2015) who warn against the conflation of 'care of self' with 'resistance' (Contu, 2008, p. 367). Contu clarifies this warning:

> It is also deadly to propose the care of self as the path that liberates "us" from the iron laws of disciplinary mechanisms. These transgressive acts that we call "resistance" are akin to a decaf resistance, which changes very little. It is resistance without the risk of really changing our ways of life or the subjects who live it. (Contu, 2008, p. 367)

More theoretically focussed political commentaries about the relationship of neoliberalism and work refer to this issue as the trap of neoliberalism. Harvey, for instance, refers to this as the 'contradiction of neoliberalism' that forces individuals to choose "between a seductive but alienating possessive individualism on the one hand and the desire for a meaningful collective life on the other" (2005, p. 69). Berardi (2009, p. 24) describes this neoliberal process as one which 'traps' workers desire into the "trick of self-enterprise" where our "libidinal investments can be regulated according to economic rules" as opposed to more moral ideals. By misbehaving, deviating from, or satirising work "resistant" workers are engaged in the sphere of work that is governed by protocols of management, and capitalism. Fleming suggests that herein lies an issue of the conceptualisation of "resistance" (2014, p. 20). He suggests that "much worker resistance is no longer fighting *against* capitalism" but rather that workers are "fighting it [capitalism] to gain a

better deal within its parameters" (2014, p. 20). While Fleming uses this point to criticise the role that work plays in society, I seek to apply this issue on an empirical level: if workers are defying aspects of work, but they are not 'resisting capitalism', what are they challenging? It seems clear from much empirical research that workers are challenging aspects of work, but it is not clear *what* they are challenging. Herein lies the fundamental research question that I ask in this thesis: what are workers responding to when they challenge work? The following conceptualisation of responsibility aims to formulate a methodological manner in which to answer this question.

Conceptualising Responsibility

The conceptualisation of responsibility in this thesis seeks to understand what shapes workers' abilities to respond to the threat of precarious work. In order to conceptualise responsibility as a response of workers to precarious working conditions it is important to avoid reductionist applications of responsibility that come with legal, managerial, or capitalistic obligations. While each of these factors may be important for organising worker responses, it is important to include social, political, and of course *moral* implications of responsibility to guarantee a flexible methodological framework. The importance of this socio-political and moral focus is formulated in Parker's (1999) essay in which he argues a more ethical analysis of organisational behaviour ought to produce a better, more sociological understanding of the role of deviance and misbehaviour in organisational research. Here Parker talks about understanding the value of particular forms of behaviour in an organisational setting which ought to be contrasted to the more prescriptive focus on morality by theorists like Schweigert (2016) and Gardner (2007). The moralistic accounts of responsibility from Schweigert (2016) and Gardner (2007) focus on responsibility as an obligation that workers *ought to* be responsible to. My conceptualisation, however, aligns more closely to Parker's in that I seek to understand what deviant workers *already are* responsible to, and how these responsibilities shape the practices of these workers.

This conceptualisation of responsibility distinguishes itself from a long history of industrial sociology that draws from Marx inspired labour process theory to examine the economic effect of the workplace on workers (Braverman, 1974; Friedman, 1977; Edwards, 1979; Gorz, 1982; Littler & Salaman, 1982). Instead, responsibility necessitates a poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity that explores the production of worker subjectivity by exploring worker obligations to various structures of power (not just the labour process). As such, responsibility follows (in a way that is admittedly inspired by Marx) through the work of Burawoy (1979) that explores the methods that workers mobilise and consent to within the particular organisational processes of their workplaces. Here Burawoy famously expanded the sociological dialogue of the labour process theory to include considerations about the production of worker subjectivity; particularly the

production or 'manufacturing' of consent[3]. This focus on the organisation of subjectivity was integral to Burawoy's research because it demonstrated how capitalist organisations rendered workers agreeable and managed their behaviour around specific managerial protocols. A similar predilection with the construction of worker behaviour has also been integral to Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) research on organisational *mis*behaviour in which the authors explore the struggle for autonomy (p. 3) of workers that had been identified as central to the political struggle between workers and management in the late 20th and early 21st century. While both Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) and Burawoy (1979) draw from labour process theory, their research points to a considerably more complex picture of social and organisational politics in which worker subjectivity is more than a product of capital labour process.

My conceptualisation of responsibility aims to continue this focus on the production of worker subjectivity beyond the models of labour process, and economic theory. Instead I build on the empirical work from poststructuralists in the early 21st century (Thomas & Davies, 2005 & 2005; Collinson, 2002; Fleming & Sewell, 2003; McCabe, 2007; Korczynski, 2009) in which theorists seek to "develop a more complex and multidirectional view" of subjects that challenge or 'resist' aspects of work (Thomas & Davies, 2005, p. 687). Thomas and Davies understand this subjective process of resistance to be "understood as a constant process of adaptation, subversion and reinscription of dominant discourses" (2005, p. 687). They explain that "this takes place as individuals confront, and reflect on, their own identity performance, recognising contradictions and tensions and, in doing so, pervert and subtly shift meanings and understandings" (Thomas & Davies, 2005a, p. 687). Rather than resistance, however, my research focuses on worker responsibilities as a method in which to understand the production of worker subjectivity. Such a methodological step is useful because it avoids the theoretically tricky maneuver of selecting workers who 'self-identify' as being 'resistant' which may risk sampling errors, preconceived worker biases about political notions of resistance, and loaded questions that assume such theoretical assumptions. Instead, the question of responsibility aims to understand what sources of authority oblige workers, and how and *why* they are subject to such responsibilities. Its conceptual strength lies in its ability to include all workers (regardless of their political consciousness) while still allowing this critical analysis of resistant subjectivity in a heavily structured and organised work environment.

In order to explore this productive aspect of responsibility, I draw from Jacques Derrida's concept of responsibility, who in his 1995 manuscript "the Gift of Death" outlines a theory of responsibility

[3] Gramsci (1971) and Herman & Chomsky (1988) also explored this aspect of subjectivity and contributed greatly to this theoretical movement.

that is ideal for an investigation of precarious workers. Derrida's conceptualisation of responsibility is important for its thorough conceptualisation, and its direct application to subjectivity, power, and as I will argue, resistance. In addition to this, Derrida's theorisation of responsibility, and its effects on understanding *subjectivity*, is applicable to workers who are subject to a dominant power schema. Derrida's philosophical method of deconstruction helps situate this concept of responsibility as something that reconceptualises the limits of subjectivity, but is still nevertheless, always bound to a matrix of power. As such, this concept serves as a valuable tool with which to analyse responses from precarious and alienated workers in the 21st century who are inherently bound to work, but who often struggle to redefine their relationship-to the schema of work.

Derrida's account of responsibility begins by identifying responsibility as an obligation to something *other* than oneself. It is an "injunction to respond", he says, "to respond to the other and answer for oneself before the other" (Derrida, 1995, p. 3). Subsequently, Derrida defines responsibility as both something that arises out of a liberal notion of the individual subject-as-agent, but also one that rejects the primacy — or authority — of that liberal subject's agency. It is the recognition that although an individual subject exists, it exists in the presence of the other; that the relationship is never complete, closed, or finished. Derrida argues that each individual exists as a subject that is linked to a history that contextualises, and naturalises that subjectivity (1995, p. 4). While such a view resonates with sociological approaches to self and identity, Derrida's concept of responsibility is useful here because it offers us a tool to analyse the remnants of power that contaminate and oblige an individual. Here Derrida suggests that each subject owes its existence to the political, social, cultural, and historical relations that render its' own existence possible. This is integral for his theory of responsibility, because responsibility — and our subjectivity — is tied inherently to this historical narrative of subjectivity (Derrida uses the term *historicity*). In the context of this thesis, the analogy is that worker subjectivity can be understood through the manner in which workers respond to this narrative of work. By understanding worker's responsibilities, whether deviant or otherwise, we can ascertain a more clear understanding of worker subjectivity.

The concept of responsibility, as it appears in Derrida's writings, is predicated on the response of this individual subject to the realisation of its own contingency in light of this external — historical — 'other'. The key to this response, Derrida insists, is the realisation that in order to respond, and acknowledge, a subject that is not oneself this liberal subject must recognise the existence of something that exists independently of oneself. More importantly, this thinking entity must recognise these foreign subjects to belong to a history that has authority over both the foreign and the thinking subjects. In the wider context of this thesis, such a theorisation suggests that the

individual worker is rendered responsible by their occupational environment. Such an environment is of course subject to the authorisation of rules and regulations at work that belong to a separate history of management, and organisational policy. Rather than analyse the separate history of organisational policy, however, Derridean thinking urges us to focus on the human-subject; namely the way the human subject is forced to be responsible to the separate history of organisational policy. Such a focus on the individual subject is important because it disrupts the autonomy of the human-subject and obliges the subject to a history that is other to itself.

By challenging the primacy, or authority of the self-knowing subject, Derrida's conceptualisation of responsibility seeks to deconstruct subjectivity. Through deconstructing subjectivity, Derrida argues that responsibility performs a kind of heresy (1995, p. 26). The responsible subject is a heretical subject because it forces the subject to make a choice against itself; it forces the subject to question and interrogate its own relationship to itself and those around it. The heresy emerges because it necessitates the individual subject to reject its own sense of individuality and independence in favour of a socio-political identity that emerges from a historical conception of self. This subjectivity is heretical because it resists the conceptualisation of itself as an entirely autonomous and liberal actor; it is heretical because it forces a single identity to forgo the illusion of secure liberal identity for the infinite unknowable relationship with otherness (Derrida, 1995, pp. 32-33). That is, it signifies the obligation of the individual self to a socio-political history it can never fully understand.

Responsibility, in Derrida's deconstructive method, becomes synonymous with social activity. Rather than other accounts of responsibility that focus on the ideological relationship with specific normative, legal, or prescriptive ideals Derrida's conceptualisation of responsibility pertains simply to the ability of an individual subject to interact with others. That is to say, responsibility involves an instrumental choice from an individual to confront the unknown otherness of the world. Being responsible in this sense involves an obligation between the individual and an environment that is always more than the individual. In this fashion, responsibility pertains to a choice, because the failure to make this connection would render a subject into isolation and egoism — a state of being that Derrida coins "irresponsibility" (1995, p. 25). Irresponsibility in this sense reflects an intuitive concept of a 'lack of awareness'. Derrida says:

> …not knowing, having neither sufficient knowledge or consciousness of what being *responsible* means, is of itself a lack of responsibility. (1995, p. 25, emphasis original)

Irresponsibility, for Derrida, emerges in those who lack this self-reflection. It emerges in those who lack the ability to engage with others and lack the ability to understand one's own subjectivity as a contingent feature of a wider historical, social and political framework. This divergence between irresponsibility and responsibility highlights the political aspect of responsibility in Derrida's theorisation. By defining irresponsibility as a lack of reflection, or indecisiveness, Derrida conceives of responsibility as an active politicisation of subjectivity — as an act that emerges from an individual choice, but also which affects the political mechanisms of self. This is an essential element to responsibility because to limit responsibility to the individual self would be to simply relegate to the self to the political hierarchy that one is born into. Derrida makes this clear:

> …if decision-making is relegated to a knowledge that it is content to follow or to develop, then it is no more a responsible decision, it is the technical deployment of a cognitive apparatus, the simple mechanistic deployment of a theorem. (Derrida, 1995, p. 24)

The responsible choice, then, is here conceptualised as a departure; both from the self, but also from a dominant discursive framework. Rather than being concerned with normative associations of morality, or civic duty, responsibility designates a concern with uncovering the obligations — or responsibilities — to certain social, political and historical narratives.

This predilection of a departure from a historical narrative of the self makes responsibility an excellent tool for sociological analysis here because it offers an objective methodology with which to assess relationships between individual workers and their work environment. By conceptualising responsibility as something that questions the authority of a subject to itself, it focuses on the political and social relationship between entities. By focusing on a critical aspect of subjectivity this conceptual framework allows my research to illuminate an aspect of subjectivity that both responds to centralised power, but also wields the potential for deviation or differentiation to forms of authority that produce a specific state of subjectivity. Moreover, such a view of responsibility allows my research to negotiate the ambiguity of deviant behaviours in the workplace whereby workers deviate from certain specific organisational protocols and not others. While the frequent inability of deviant workers to challenge the capitalistic economy of the labour process has been problematic for organisational theorists (McCabe, 2007; Korczynski, 2011) conceptualising such deviance as a social responsibility allows my research to analyse deviance in a more political light as an action that shapes the future organisation of labour activity.

Responsibility, Resistance and Anarchism

This Derridean conceptualisation of responsibility serves as a conceptual framework upon which my thesis will deconstruct the relationship of workers to their workplaces. Such an approach allows me to illuminate the responsibility and obligations that tie workers to the institution of work. Furthermore, this framework allows me to investigate the shared, social, obligations of workers as they engage with others in their day-to-day routine of working.

One particular strength of implementing this poststructuralist framework is poststructuralism's commitment to (specifically Derrida's version of it) revealing the political implications of rejecting foundational approaches to theory and practice (Williams, 2010). Newman (2010) has argued that that (this Derridean version of) poststructuralism offers us a radically political framework in which to "think politics outside the state" and through which to "explore the constituent principles and ethical contours of a political space which seeks autonomy from the order of the state" (p. 167). Furthermore, he adds that deconstructive theory, particularly Derrida's, is invaluable to the recognition of radical politics; that is a form of politics that emerges in the periphery of current political narratives. He understands deconstruction, for Derrida, to be "a 'methodology aimed at interrogating and unmasking the conceptual hierarchies, binary oppositions and aporias in philosophy – its moments of inconsistency and self-contradiction" (2010, p. 5). This Derridean version of poststructuralism is more useful than others, like Foucault or Deleuze and Guatarri, Newman says, because it focuses on the human subject without deteriorating the subject into 'sites of power and discourse' or fragmenting the subject into a 'haphazard language of machines, parts and flows, and operations that deny radical politics a necessary point of departure" (2001, p. 7). "In their rejection of humanism" Newman argues, Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari "have paradoxically denied themselves the possibility of resistance against the domination they see as inextricably involved in humanist discourse" (2001, p. 7). By keeping the human subject as the site of power, Newman argues that Derrida's version of poststructuralism focuses on "engagement rather than escape" of subjectivity; that rather than "retreat from the world of struggle and contestation" poststructuralism views subjectivity as an "open ended project" that is "constructed through ongoing practices of opposition and democratisation (Newman, 2010, p. 167). As such, Newman's argument focuses on the individual human subject's ability to overcome its own reliance on dominating power-structures through the process of subjectivity, and engagement with others in similar positions. Such a theoretical framework is ideal for the social phenomena of deviant workers in my research, because it addresses the social reality that these (precarious) workers find themselves in; that work is essential to their survival, and so they must continue to work under the precarious conditions they are subject to.

An essential feature of Newman's understanding of Derrida's poststructuralism is its "an-archic" approach to understanding subjectivity (2001, p. 17). This anarchism arises through Derrida's persistent deconstruction of authority and power-structures, and the process they play in the construction of subjectivity. Newman argues this anarchist element is valuable to the analysis of poststructuralism because it forces agents to explore the limits of their obligation to an idea, or a set of believes. Such a line of thinking, Newman suggests, pushes the individual agent to:

> …position oneself entirely on the outside of any structure as a form of resistance is only to reaffirm, in a reversed way, what one resists. This idea, however, of an outside created by the limits of the inside may allow us to conceive of a politics of resistance which does not restore the place of power. So not only does Derrida suggest a way of theorizing difference without falling back into essentialism, he also points to the possibility of an outside. (Newman, 2001, p.11)

By pointing to the limits of a political obligation, or responsibility, to a narrative Newman suggests that Derrida's philosophy produces an anti-authoritarian politics (2001, p. 18). He suggests that this deconstructive method forms a poststructuralist Anarchism (herein referred to as Postanarchism) whereby "an anti-political politics" (2010, p. 4) is formed that can be useful for exploring ways in which to challenge the continuity of neoliberal subjectivity. This politics is anti-political, Newman argues, because it seeks to dislodge politics from its central reliance on a state framework so that politics might become more free to exist outside the "ontological order of state sovereignty" (2010, p. 4). Postanarchism's ability to challenge neoliberal subjectivity, Newman argues, is vital given the failure of Marxist-Leninist projects of revolution to "transform the field of social relationships through the seizure of state power" (2017, p. 286). Instead, Newman argues that "we need a new 'non-strategic' paradigm of political action that, at the same time, contests and transcends the current neoliberal order in which politics has for the past decades been trapped" (2017, p. 286).

In this way, the Postanarchist project both draws from post-Marxist and autonomist theory (i.e. Hardt & Negri, 2000; Berardi, 2009; Lazzarato, 2011 &2014), and diverges from it. On the one hand, both Postanarchism and post/autonomist Marxism share the desire to destroy neoliberal capitalism and share the commitment to individual autonomy and non-hierarchical authority. Nevertheless, the Anarchist — and particularly the Postanarchist — theorists focus on a prefigurative politics that attempts to create movements that "prefigure" the "political and social relations they seek to establish" (Gautney, 2009, p 478). Newman has characterised this prefigurative theory as one that refers to the idea that "political action should already embody the ethical form and principles of the type of society one hopes to build" (Newman, 2016, p.34). Newman continues to explain such practices require "constant work" in order to "invent

subjectivities and relationships which are self-governing and no longer enthralled to power" (2016, p. 35), and thus presents the Postanarchist ethic as a continual process of self and *social* development. While Gordon (2018, p. 535) agrees with such understanding of prefiguration, he is quick to warn that such prefiguration must not be reduced to 'presentism' and urges Anarchists to be conscious of the "affordances and tendencies of infrastructures and socio-technical systems" that underline capitalist society. Gordon emphasises the need for a social conceptualisation of Anarchism and distances this strain of Postanarchist thought from a more libertarian and individualist conceptualisation of Anarchist theory. Such considerations suggest that the Postanarchist conceptualisation of responsibility offers a useful tool for investigating the responses and struggles of insecure workers in my research because it looks to the prefigurative nature of workers behaviour and obligations. That is, it assumes these responsibilities that workers adopt are organisational tools that cultivate political identity, subjectivity, and belonging.

Anarchist theory offers a distinct advantage to sociological study, argues Shantz (2014) because of its focus on pragmatic processes in which individuals challenge the legitimacy of centralised authority without seeking to replace these processes with other, equally dominating forms of power. This interest in decentralised approaches to power, and the informal and self-organisational patterns with which workers employ to contest centralised power can already be seen from empirical research demonstrated in the first section of this chapter. Such investigations already suggest the benefit of an anarchic approach to worker patterns of deviance, nevertheless, more conceptualised 'Anarchist methodologies' do already exist in the social sciences. Amster (2008), for instance, employs a similar Anarchist methodology as a means to investigating a "praxis-oriented approach that emphasised lived experienced, a critical posture, and the promotion of emancipatory aims" (Amster, 2008, p. 128). Such a methodology embraces the idea of a "theory of spontaneous order" where organisms and communities might be "self-organising and self-regulating" and "voluntarily and spontaneously" involved in "mutually beneficial cooperative endeavours" (Amster, 2008, p. 133). This insistence on a mutually beneficial, and spontaneous self-organisation is useful for Amster's anthropological research into homeless communities who are often forced to exist in-between public and private spaces in urban environments. Likewise, Derrida's deconstructive methodology draws upon a similar anarchic methodology that promises to illuminate the political obligations that tie individual workers towards these more mutual, and beneficial endeavours.

The involvement of mutual self-organisation in anarchistic thought can be traced back to Proudhon, who in the mid-19th century, defined 'Anarchy' as a state of order in the absence of a master, or a sovereign (Woodcock, 1962, p. 10). Anarchism's involvement has seen a modest rival in recent

times as researchers explore resistance movements to 'neoliberalism'. In an analysis of the Occupy Wall Street phenomenon Graeber argues that an anarchistic approach to centralised (neoliberal) power is evident (2015, p. 60). Graeber suggests that these protests advocate direct action, and practical demonstrations of a "genuinely non-bureaucratised social order" that is indicative of resistance movements in contemporary times. Earlier Graeber suggested that these neoliberal protests were anarchistic because they are "less about seizing state power than about exposing, delegitimising and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy from it" (2002, p. 9). Perhaps more to the point, the Occupy movement brought together diverse groups of protesters under this guise for mutual benefit, namely the goal of decentralising the vast amount of wealth and power that resides among the '1 per cent'. Ruth Kinna also argues that "anti-capitalist protest movement(s)" should be "regarded as a sign of Anarchism's revival" in recent times (2007, p. 67). She argues that the continuous challenges of society from "diverse groups asserting their power in particular ways" reflects the Anarchist view that "there is no Archimedian point for change, no final goal or liberated condition" (Kinna, 2007, p. 69). Such a continuous methodology of struggle resonates with the workers involved in this research whose struggles have been continuous since (at least) the Industrial Revolution.

The key to the use of Anarchist methodology in the social sciences emerges from its ability to challenge the neoliberal reduction of subjectivity to the individual. Anarchism's focus on local forms on non-hierarchical organisation have been valuable to researchers interested in researching power as well as alternate forms of social and political organisation in the field. James Scott (2012), for instance has used Anarchism's focus on 'mutual aid' in his ongoing research of power and organisation amongst subordinate social groups. A central feature of Scott's research has been to understand the behaviour of those who are forced to operate "outside the visible spectrum of what usually passes for political activity" (Scott, 2012, p. xx). This spectrum, which Scott refers to as an "infrapolitical spectrum" of behaviour is important, he argues in earlier research, because it refers to an "unobtrusive realm of political struggle" which underpins much of the political organisation (or infrastructure) of these subordinate groups (Scott, 1990, p. 183). It is a "real politics" Scott argues, that refers to the gains and losses of material spaces, the implementation and contestation of rights, the cultural practice of dignity and vengefulness, and — as emphasised by Derrida's deconstructive method — the continuous "pressing, testing, and probing" of the "boundaries of the permissible" (1990, p. 200). Scott defines infrapolitics through the material acts such as "foot-dragging, poaching, pilfering, dissimulation, sabotage, desertion, absenteeism, squatting, and flight" (2012, p. xx), and argues that such a strategic form of resistance is essential to "objects in conditions of great peril" (1990, p. 199). Therefore, Scott concludes in his later work, "the experience of anarchistic

mutuality is ubiquitous" amongst human experience today which "operates side-by-side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society" (2012, p. xxi). Consequently, Scott's interest in Anarchist theory draws similarities with Amster's sociological field work by focusing on resistant behaviours and practices of individuals. This focus on the lived experience and performance of resistant power clearly reflects the methodological focus in which Graeber, Kinna, and Newman present the Anarchist assertion of direct action in which people directly (without recourse to an external Deus ex Machina) struggle against and affect the hegemonic reproduction of political power. This Anarchist framework promises to be useful for research into precarious workers because precarious workers, like the vulnerable groups in Amster and Scott's research, have little formal recourse to challenge managerial and bureaucratic power. In the absence of union representation, and permanent employment contracts (and the social capital that arises from continuous tenure at work) the resources to challenge work for precarious workers are limited, which leaves more direct forms of anarchistic deviance an ideal mechanism for this group of workers.

By implementing this poststructuralist conceptualisation of Anarchism to examine the role of deviant behaviour in precarious workplaces, I seek to address concerns raised, in the first section of this chapter, by Contu and Paulsen about the ability of workers to directly challenge the economic hegemony of work. This Postanarchist framework presents a platform upon which to analyse the (mutual) interactions of cohorts of precarious workers in an effort to understand a more socio-political, rather than a personal (or neoliberal) deviation from dominant power. By exploring the deviant responsibilities of precarious workers, my research seeks to illuminate the manner in which worker responsibilities are obliged by struggles for mutual aid, and mutual benefit.

This conception of deviance can be understood to depart from those sociologists, anthropologists, and management theorists (Taylor & Walton, 1971; Mars, 1982; Hollinger, 1986) who have conceptualised deviance apolitically. My conceptualisation of deviance can also be distinguished from more recent iterations of the notion from organisational theorists who use the term 'misbehaviour' to distinguish their scientific interest in the process from a more political conceptualisation of deviance (Ackroyd & Thompson 1999; Vardi & Weitz, 2004). Instead, by exploring the responsibilities of workers that deviate from official work responsibilities, I hope to demonstrate how even the most precarious and insecure workers draw from social networks to challenge power and create a more meaningful and secure social existence. I believe that such a *political* conceptualisation of 'deviance' is vital to this project because it is the monumental threat of stale, repetitive, meaningless, and 'bullshit jobs' — to use Graeber's phrase (see Graeber, 2018)

— that elicits this existentially deviant struggle from workers. In this way, my research hopes to add to Papadopoulos' (2016, p. 139) hypothesis that:

> In order to be able to survive precarious work one has to rely on and mobilise a wide array of relations, tricks, people and infrastructures that are only indirectly connected to the actual labour process.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to present a methodology in which to investigate the resistive potential of workers under precarious working conditions. I have argued that rather than take a more overarching narrative of resistance that is born out of a Marxist, or a Marx-inspired Labour Process Theory, to instead deploy a more anarchistic narrative in which the delegitimisation or decentralisation of power is the focus of resistance. This Anarchist framework has been presented through Derrida's deconstructive approach to responsibility, in which responsibility is defined as a process of being-with-others. Here responsibility is conceptualised as an inherent aspect of all social interactions. Rather than a question of social nature, responsibility focuses on the question of choice: *what* are workers responsible to, and *how* do they shape these responsibilities? This conceptualisation of subjectivity, unlike Foucault or Deleuze and Guattari's concepts, maintains its focus on the fundamentally *human* subject without fragmenting subjectivity into various discourses, and sites of power (Newman, 2001). Derrida's concept of responsibility allows us to work within the discourse that creates subjectivity, rather than looking for other external discourses to liberate the subject. This framework is valuable for the investigation of precarious workers because precarious workers are vulnerable, and often lack the resources necessary to formally challenge their nature of their employment (i.e. unionisation, employment security). As such, this concept of responsibility is valuable because it allows my research to explore the manner in which precarious workers draw from local and direct sources of power to challenge the workplace. More importantly, this framework promises to illustrate the collective aspects of deviance that are often absent from sociological investigations into resistance in contemporary work that draw from poststructuralist methodologies. Instead, the Postanarchist methodology understands responsibility as an individual and collective practice whereby workers autonomously share and circulate political obligations.

While much research has been invested into understanding resistant mechanisms of individual workers, there is considerable concern that these individual mechanisms begin and end with the individual worker. The isolation of resistance to individual workers risks 'privileging' resistance, and creating further class divides between workers who can afford to resist, and those who cannot.

By employing this conceptual framework of responsibility, and exploring collective or shared obligations to deviant practices amongst workers, my research hopes to illuminate a more socio-political response to precarity and work than the more individualistic and neoliberal accounts that have been emerging in the literature.

Finally, this chapter has presented a theory of responsibility with which to apply to the empirical investigation of workers whose subjectivity at work is likely to be insecure or precarious. By testing the responsibility of these workers, I hope to understand both 'how' workers respond to precarious work, but also '*why'* they deviate from certain work responsibilities and not others. Through this conceptualisation of responsibility I will outline my methods and rational for data collection in the following chapter. Moreover, through this theoretical conceptualisation of responsibility I will present data that illustrates workers' strategic response to precarious work on a political basis that offers an account of deviance, and resistance against the endemic privatisation, and individualisation of 21st century political-economy.

Chapter 4: Methods

The aim of the chapter is to detail how I examined workers who are subject to insecure and precarious employment conditions. More specifically, this chapter will explain how I identified deviant practices, and how I conceptualise them as methods of resistance in the research. I outline how I employed a case study across five worksites to analyse the responsibilities of cohorts of workers who are subject to precarious working conditions. Precarious worksites were chosen so that any 'alternate responsibilities' displayed by workers would stand out, and could be contrasted against ordinary and routine obligations of work. The fundamental aim of the study was to highlight the manner in which workers are obliged by, or responsible to, shared processes with their wider working cohort. More specifically, I examine the obligations and responsibilities of workers as they are crafted around both self-organisation, as well as mutual benefit with fellow colleagues.

This chapter draws upon the theoretical conceptualisation of responsibility in the previous chapter in which responsibility is conceived through its obligation to something other than the liberal self. This Derridean conceptualisation of responsibility is central to the methodical collection of data in this research because it ensures themes of responsibility collected address a 'responsibility-to-others' rather than the more neoliberal focus on a form of 'self-responsibility' that overshadows contemporary accounts of resistance in the literature. Consequently, the collection of data and structure of the interview questions reflects this conceptualisation of responsibility by focusing on cohorts of workers, and well as directing questions around collective responsibilities. This framework will be essential to challenging the neoliberal hypothesis because it views the individual worker as being part of, rather than independent of, a working environment.

Data were collected from 30 semi-structured, qualitative interviews across five sites in the greater Brisbane region. Six workers from each site were interviewed via semi-structured, conversational, interviews in a setting of their choice outside the workplace. This chapter will detail over six sections how these interview methods were constructed around the theoretical framework of responsibility. The first outlines my philosophy of methods in which I present my interpretivist methodology as central to the production of knowledge in this thesis. The second explains how field sites were identified to guarantee access to insecure, or precarious workers. The third section outlines the manner in which cohorts of workers were accessed for interviews. It specifically details the rationale behind a 'chain-referral' sampling method, and outlines the importance of gatekeepers as a method for accessing relevant participants from field sites. The fourth section presents the logic behind the interview questions, and how they test for 'alternate' responsibilities. Issues of intersubjectivity and the manner in which I conducted myself and the interviews off-site are also detailed here. The fifth section details the thematic process of interpreting the data. More

specifically, it outlines how the Derridean notion of responsibility and the Postanarchist themes of 'decentralised power' were used to form analytic categories for coding participant responses. The sixth and final section of this chapter addresses the ethical issues faced in this research. It outlines issues of ethical consent, participant anonymity and the use of cash as an incentive for participation.

Responsibility, Postanarchism, and Interpretivism: A Methodology

Given the conceptualisation of responsibility in the previous chapter, this section will clarify how empirical evidence and data will be produced in this research in order to generate *knowledge* about the responsibility of workers in the workplace. Here, I follow Mason's (2002, p. 56) conceptualisation of interpretivism as a method towards "understanding the social world people have produced and which they reproduce through their continuing activities". Central to this method, Mason insists, is an approach that views "people, and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings, as the primary data sources" (2002, p. 56). Such an interpretivist methodology will be essential to understanding the obligations of workers to various structures-of-power, or forms of authority as they emerge throughout the day-to-day responsibilities of the workers. Nevertheless, given the focus on insecure and precarious workers, an interpretivist methodology is essential to understanding how some responsibilities are more valuable, or powerful, than others at affecting political change and security in the workplace.

Schwandt (2000) argues that interpretivism has been an integral methodology in the "human sciences" since the "late 19th and early 20th centuries" in contradistinction to the philosophies of positivism and logical positivism (p. 191). Furthermore, Schwandt argues that what is integral to the interpretivist point of view is that human (social) action can be distinguished from the movement of physical objects not by cause, but through *meaning* (2000, p. 191):

> Thus, to understand a particular social action (e.g. friendship, voting, marrying, teaching), the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute that action. To say that human action is meaningful is to claim either that it has a certain intentional content that indicates the kind of action it is and/or that what an action means can be grasped only in terms of the system of meanings to which it belongs. (Schwandt, 2000, p. 191)

Here I envisage this interpretivist paradigm to be synonymous with my poststructuralist and Postanarchist theoretical framework (see Chapter Three) in its goal of identifying worker responsibilities. This interpretive methodology is valuable because it understands "knowledge, including scientific knowledge, as historically situated and entangled in power relationships" which can be associated with a phenomenological focus on lived experience and case study work (Schwandt & Gates, 2017, p. 605). The association of epistemology with power relationships is

integral to both poststructuralist and Postanarchist theories because both frameworks conceptualise subjectivity to be a process that is constructed by — or produced through — relationships with the social domain. Thus, through understanding this social domain, interpretivism offers a methodology in which my conceptual framework can further investigate power relationships between workers and their workplace. By employing an interpretive methodology, I intend to examine how workers create meaning by taking on responsibilities at work, and how these responsibilities reflect obligations to various forms of authority in, and beyond, the workplace.

Such a "post-paradigmatic approach to qualitative research" (Pernecky, 2016, p.196) is important because it allows the research to explore the role of work beyond purely economic constraints that have been central to Marxists and labour process theorists in the past (i.e. Burawoy, 1979; Braverman, 1974). Considering the goal of my research is to understand how workers respond to, and resist, insecurity at work, a methodology that is open to *new* or *creative* avenues of work is essential. Moreover, as Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2013, p. 200) suggest, such a post-paradigmatic approach is useful to sociological research because it demonstrates how "paradigms exhibit confluence, and where and how they exhibit differences, controversies, and contradictions". So too does this Postanarchist/interpretivist approach to worker responsibility allow me to explore emerging processes of resistance, struggle, and domination by examining worker responsibilities to certain duties and obligations at work. Such a thorough investigation of subjectivity through its relationship to power is important because, as Schwandt reminds us, "understanding…is dialogic":

> …it is always bound up with language and is achieved only through a logic of question and answer. Moreover, understanding is something that is *produced* in that dialogue, not something reproduced by an interpreter through an analysis of that which he or she seeks to understand. (Schwandt, 2000, p. 195)

Consequently, this interpretivist methodology, alongside a poststructuralist/Postanarchist theoretical framework is fundamental for my investigation of insecure/precarious worker experiences because it constructs a dialogic process in which worker responsibility can be examined as a social process. That is, this interpretivist methodology allows my research to focus on the role of responsibility in shaping meaning for these workers and thus, it demonstrates how workers experiences are shaped by security and insecurity in their workplaces.

Finding Appropriate Sites: Critically Assessing Precarious Worksites

In order to examine the responses of workers to insecure work, I analyse the ability of workers to deviate from ordinary work responsibilities. By understanding these alternate forms of responsibilities I can analyse how workers reproduce and challenge aspects of insecure work and

how they are involved in the transformation of work. A central focus of my research involves unskilled and low-skilled non-permanent workers, rather than 'self-employed contractors' involved in 'gig work' like Uber drivers who are often at the forefront of research on precarity (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016; Olliverre, Younge, Robles, Guerrero, Adam, & Carter, 2017; International Labour Organization, 2016). The exclusion of 'gig workers' from this research was because they have an aspect of mobility that is less common amongst unskilled and low-skilled labourers. By minimising the potential for mobility, my research seeks to represent a class of workers who lack the ability to challenge their precarious relationship to work. While, Friedman (2014, p. 180) points out that "few of the workers in the gig economy actually enjoy" the freedom and flexibility that is perceived to accompany gig work, there is an undeniable difference between the two forms of work. While 'gig workers' are precarious, and often rely on each 'gig' to get by, they have a form of flexibility that is not extended to un/low-skilled labourers who are subject to hourly quotas, heavy surveillance at work, arduous paperwork, and sometimes even timed toilet breaks. By focusing on un/low-skilled labourers my research focuses on a sample of workers who are much more likely to be both employed in a non-permanent capacity as well as being alienated and estranged from monotonous and repetitive work. Moreover, by focusing on a group of workers who have a limited skillset and a structured workload, my research focuses on a group of workers who are unlikely to have the means to bargain for better employment conditions. The absence of bargaining power, secure employment conditions, and skilled work ought to guarantee a sample of workers who are more insecure than gig workers who have a broader and more diversifiable skillset.

The examination of worker responsibility will be done using a case study. Case studies present a fundamental methodological foundation for sociological research (Erikson, 2018), that are valuable for creating "context dependent knowledge" that is necessary to create a more comprehensive, and 'expert' understanding of social relationships (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 221). This context dependent knowledge is vital to human understanding, says Flyvbjerg, because it illuminates "the complexities and contradictions of real life" and thus is useful because it uncovers "a particularly rich problematic" (2006, p. 237). Human behaviour, says Flyvbjerg, cannot be understood alone through rule governed acts found in theory and, Flyvbjerg adds, this more complex understanding of the "ambiguity of [human] politics" is essential to understanding the "complexities and contradictions of real life" (2006, p. 227). More recent sociologists like Erikson (2018), Edmonds and Kennedy (2017), and Lune and Berg (2017) also agree that case studies are valuable methods for understanding contemporary social phenomena.

My research builds follows these recommendations by implementing a critical examination of deviant responsibility across five worksites. This analysis of deviant responsibility relies on a

thorough assessment of power-relations that function to organise workers in these sites. The analysis of power-relations draws from the Postanarchist conceptualisation of responsibility in Chapter Three. This Postanarchist approach promises to generate a critical, and socially aware data for the case study by drawing attention to the connection between worker obligations to both work and non-work responsibilities. Through this analysis, structures that authorise and organise worker behaviour, discipline, and motivation will be rendered evident and the manner in which workers deviate and challenge these structures will be made clear. This theoretical conceptualisation of responsibility serves to build upon the empirical research from McCabe (2007), Thomas and Davies (2005), Fleming and Sewell (2002), and Korczynski (2011). This Postanarchist focus offers to contribute to existing research by demonstrating power-structures that authorise worker behaviour that emerge from social avenues between workers, rather than from top-down forces like management, or administration. Newman identifies this Postanarchist focus as one concerned with "horizontal" power relations that are based on mutual cooperation and "self-organised and autonomous action which is outside the representative structures of the state" (2016, p. 69). Here Postanarchism makes a conscious attempt to "create a space for new forms of political and ethical interaction, association and, indeed, subjectivation (Newman, 2016, p. 69)." Such a theoretical focus is valuable to my research because it is precisely this political and ethical struggle to transform subjectivity that is at the heart of this research.

A central problem this research faces arises from the ubiquitous nature of theory on precarity and insecurity at work; namely that precarity and insecurity can be, and are, measured in any number of ways (Kalleberg, 2009; Doogan, 2015; Gallie et al. 2016). As demonstrated in Chapter Two, Gallie et al. (2016, p. 2) point out the most common focus of research tends to focus on the aspect of job insecurity that is concerned with "fear of loss of employment". However, there are far wider insecurities that threaten the working relationship or render it insecure. As illustrated in Chapter One, there are many factors in the Australian setting that render working conditions precarious like: increasing household income to debt ratios, increasing casualisation, deregulation of labour laws, declining wages, declining union membership (and power). As such, one could argue that any number of working scenarios in Australia would be subject to precarious conditions. In order to ensure a more critical and consistent representation of precarious work, I implement a 3-point check list. Each of the three points has been inferred from the theoretical analysis of precarity and insecurity (see Chapter Two) into pragmatic and applicable methods to identify appropriate workplaces to conduct interviews.

(1) The organisation must have a minimum of 1000 employees.

This first factor to identify precarious avenues of employment in my research addresses the size of the working organisation. This factor was important because it ensured that the balance of power in the working relationship was more likely to be held by a centralised administrative system. The marginalisation, and alienation, of workers under large and centralised working conditions is well documented in sociological and political literature (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Beck, 2000; Smith, 2001; Kalleberg, 2009; Berardi, 2009; Standing, 2011; Lazzarato, 2011). Central to this principle, argues Smith (2001) is that administrative texts and documents help to establish organisations into a specific ontological form. That is, administrative documents and texts are "active in organising people's activities in organisational and institutional settings" and that it is through this organisational process that individuals give power to, or empower the ontological status of the central organisation (Smith, 2001, p. 192). By ensuring that my field sites include at least 1000 employees I ensure that workers are subordinated to a powerful, centralised managerial system.

(2) Participants must rely on this job as their main means of economic income.

While this does not necessarily exclude workers who have a second job, it was important to secure a sample of workers who relied on the job that I was interviewing them for. This premise aims to guarantee participants are economically reliant on the job about which they are interviewed. Securing this economic necessity of employment is important because it ensures workers are more likely to internalise the risk of instability and insecurity from work. As numerous theorists argue, one important reason job instability and insecurity are so problematic is because of global reliance on ongoing employment to foster continuous consumerism, and debt (Beck, 2000; Beck, 2009; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Bauman, 2001; Castells, 2010; Graeber, 2011). Beck suggests that this reliance on work is a by-product of the fear that capital manufactures globally amongst those who cannot "keep the economy growing" (2008, p. 114). Consequently, by ensuring that participants are reliant on their job as their main means of income I ensure that workers are more likely to internalise the fear of insecurity and precarity.

A significant ramification of ensuring this point, however, is that it excludes a large proportion of workers often summarised as precarious workers in contemporary society. The exclusion of workers in gig economies, as explained above, is an unavoidable but necessary aspect of research because it helps to ensure a sample size of workers who are not just involved in unstable employment, but are likely to be insecure, and have fewer resources to challenge said insecurity. Guaranteeing workers who are not just uncertain but *also* insecure is essential to my research, because it ensures that any findings of alternate responsibilities can be juxtaposed against neoliberal theories of resistance.

(3) Participants must have quantitatively measured work responsibilities.

This final factor is essential for the defining terms of responsibility throughout the research. Given the specific focus on organising responsibility, having a clear method of organising data between official work-responsibilities, and non-work-responsibilities is essential. If work-responsibilities can be easily defined through quantitative measures, then the data can easily pin-point non-work responsibilities, or non-essential responsibilities for which workers are responsible. These quantifiable, and measurable tasks can be seamlessly contrasted to "alternate", and specifically social responsibilities that emerge throughout the interviews.

Theorists like Hardt and Negri (2000), Beradi (2009), Lazzarato (2014), and more recently Moore and Robinson (2016) point out, a central experience of precarious work is associated with quantified performance measurements. By privileging quantitatively measured work duties, my research focuses on workers who are less likely to have control over the fundamental mechanisms of their work. Moore and Robinson draw from Hardt and Negri (2000) when they argue that the "current wave of technologies means that 'as general social knowledge becomes ever more a direct force of production, we increasingly think like computers'" (Moore & Robinson, 2016, p. 2775). They argue that neoliberalism emerges through organisational regimes that subordinate workers to "technologies and specific precarious logics" (Moore & Robinson, 2016, p. 2776). Furthermore, they argue that this logic of work operates as a kind of "empty functionalism" that organises rationality into an "inductive it-works" orientation that is justified by a kind of neoliberal internalisation of economic rationalism (Moore & Robinson, 2016, p. 2785). By ensuring workers have clear quantitatively measured responsibilities, I ensure a method for clearly distinguishing between work responsibilities, and non-work or social responsibilities. By ensuring that participants in my research are subject to quantitatively measured quotas and work responsibilities, I ensure a sample size that guarantees both precarious workers, but also a method for distinguishing between various responsibilities of these precarious workers.

This 3-point checklist serves as a framework to guarantee that participants interviewed throughout the research process were most likely to be engaged in uncertain, or insecure relationships with their workplace. While the exclusion of 'gig work' and technology platforms that offer 'flexible employment opportunities' (i.e. Uber, Deliveroo, TaskRabbit, etc.) from this research means excluding a significant industry involved in 'precarious employment' from the study, it is necessary to ensure a less mobile, more insecure sample size for research. Furthermore, this focus on un/low-skilled labourers presents workers who are subject to quantifiable labour outputs which allows for a more clear identification of work-responsibilities that can then be differentiated to responsibilities that deviate from these quantitative work-responsibilities. The key to critically analysing

responsibility in this research, and specifically resistance, lies in securing participants who have no formal mechanisms to challenge power in their workplace. If my research can identify participants who have little recourse to power, and illustrate the existence of alternate responsibilities within this space, then a case for a form of resistance that challenges the neoliberal narrative can be mounted.

Sampling Technique

Cohorts of six participants from five separate worksites around the greater Brisbane region were interviewed for a total of 30 participants interviewed, overall. The sample was achieved in accordance with Mason's (2010) advice that the guiding principle for arriving at an adequate sample size should be the concept of saturation. While flexible sampling began, recurring themes became clear after 13-15 interviews across three sites had been completed. Subsequently, in order to ensure a thorough saturation, as well as a thorough conceptualisation of data a final sample of 30 workers was determined, and two more worksites were included in order to increase the diversity of the sample size (Cresswell, 2014, p. 310). This diversification was achieved with the aim of exploring and testing the research findings of responsibility to a larger scale, as well as rectifying a male dominant sample in the early stages of research (see the section below on Gender Representation). The limitation of six participants for each work site sample was deemed appropriate because responsibilities, and themes of 'smart' and 'ideal' behaviour appeared with regularity between three or more workers in the same site.

Site Selection

Five sites were identified using the selection criteria identified in the previous section. A factor in site selection was a continuous relationship with a gatekeeper at each site that will be detailed in the relevant section. The sites, which need to remain anonymous for ethical purposes (see Ethics), include:

> Site 1: a grocery retailer that employs 100,000+ workers nationally. Responsibilities of workers recruited for interviews included either/or both (i) stacking shelves, (ii) operating the cash register.
>
> Site 2: an automotive parts warehouse that serves as a state-wide distribution centre to a company that employs 4000+ workers nationally. Responsibilities of workers recruited for interviews included packing boxes and stacking pallets.
>
> Site 3: an assembly line that services the south-east Queensland region to a parent company that employs 7500+ workers globally. Responsibilities of workers recruited for interviews included fixing or replacing broken hardware on a production line.

Site 4: a warehouse that supplies a global retailer that employs 125,000+ workers globally. Responsibilities of workers recruited for interviews included packing boxes and stacking pallets

Site 5: a consumer goods retailer that serves the public and employs 7500+ nationally. Responsibilities of workers recruited for interviews included either/or both (i) stacking shelves, (ii) operating the cash register.

Accessing Participants

Participants were recruited through a chain-referral technique that involved the cooperation of an informal gatekeeper at each site. The chain-referral technique was useful because it allowed access to a population of workers who were otherwise hard to reach (Mason, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2012; Handcock & Gile, 2011; Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubaker, 2015). While insecure workers are by no means difficult to find in contemporary society, accessing them in association with a particular workplace proved challenging after the first three work sites contacted declined to participate in any university research projects. Consequently, by implementing the chain-referral sampling technique I was able to access participants independently of formal working arrangements with the cooperation of informal gatekeepers. While this meant that I had to adhere to several ethical considerations relating to privacy and consent, this sampling technique allowed me to access participants who were otherwise unavailable to my research behind "locked doors" (Goodman, 2011).

Cohorts of Workers

Identifying cohorts of workers in worksites was vital to conceptualising subjectivity in my research. While interviews were conducted on an individual (i.e. one-on-one) basis, individual worker responses were contextualised as a function of a wider organisational process. In a manuscript exploring class consciousness, Ollman (2018) argues that workers are the embodiment and personification of capital and wage labour (p. 5). As such, he argues that workers are essential to understanding the social effects of the working relationship because they are the living function of that relationship (Ollman, 2018, pp. 5-6). Understanding the relationship of (a group of) workers as a function of the organisational system of work is therefore essential to the social analysis of the workplace, Ollman argues, because it allows the social process in which worker subjectivity is produced to be clarified as a function of work (2018, p. 6).

I extend Ollman's (Marxist) framework to my Derridean focus on responsibility. Rather than conceiving subjectivity as a function of capital and wage labour, I conceptualise worker subjectivity as a function of their relationship and obligations/responsibilities to their cohort of workers. Such a

focus allows my research to investigate the production of subjectivity through the connections between workers and their work-environment.

While Ollman's overall intent to establish a form of class analysis is not an explicit research question in this thesis, this approach to groups (or cohorts) of workers serves to strengthen the collection of data by allowing themes from interviews to be compared with accounts from fellow workers. Through this comparative approach my analysis presents a more critical account of worker subjectivity as I express subjectivity as a function of responsibility to various practices and processes in the work-environment. This organisational approach allows my research to analyse social and political relationships between work and workers, rather than reducing findings to individual or personal interactions between specific workers.

Gatekeepers

Informal gatekeepers were essential to the success of this research because they provided access to social cohorts in worksites, secured participant recruitment, as well as providing access to social 'cliques' in each of the workplaces (Goodman, 2011). Access to these 'cliques' helped analyse responsibility by allowing the comparison between participant responses from the same conditions in the same site. By ensuring six participants were interviewed from each cohort, a representative sample of 'worker responsibilities' was achieved. Moreover, given the nature of insecure and un/low-skilled labour, it was important to have a cohort sample large enough to counter any narratives from workers who might be using casual work as a temporary source of income without being as precariously tied to employment as others (for example, university students who take seasonal work in a warehouse when semester is out).

As Turner and Almac (2017) and Crowhurst (2013) point out, gatekeepers are dynamic figures in research who drive and influence much of the research. As such, tight social bonds with gatekeepers were developed and sustained through several means. First, gatekeepers were sourced from my own social networks. This allowed me to draw on pre-existing social capital, and personal experience, to ensure ongoing relationships with *reliable* gatekeepers. Second, the gatekeepers' ability to recruit participants for research was aided by supplying them with information sheets to inform their colleagues in the workplace. Third, I paid $20 cash for interviews to increase participation rates, and alleviate gatekeepers from taking too much responsibility for the success (or failure) of my research. The use of cash incentives has some ethical considerations that will be addressed in the section on Ethics, however, the cash incentive proved to be a successful tactic to entice participation in research (Lune & Berg, 2017; Singer & Ye, 2012).

Gender Representation

As of 2016, 46.2 per cent of all employees in the Australian workforce are women, with women comprising 54.7 per cent of all casual employees (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2016). Given the casual employment of most participants in my research, a gender split of 16 men to 14 women would be an ideal representative of the gendered nature of the Australian workforce. Nevertheless, despite my efforts to ensure a proportional gender division in my research I only achieved a split of 23-7 in favour of men. This disproportionate representation may be due to a number of factors. One possible factor was that three of my gatekeepers were men, while only one was a woman, and the other an (openly) gay man. The dominant representation of gatekeepers who were men may have influenced the referral of other men for research. Another possible factor that may have influenced the sample size was the site section criteria which privileges large-scale organisations that have largely quantifiable workloads. Such a focus excludes industries like health care, education, and service sectors where women are more frequently employed in Australia (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2016). The recognition of this disproportionate sample size led to the inclusion of two extra sites for research including a retailer (Site 5) that employed numerous women.

Questions of cause aside, accounts of deviant responsibility in the interviews did not vary significantly between sex and gender. While women were under-represented in my sample, the quality of responses and the occurrences of various forms of responsibility do not reflect a gendered privilege. Women reported similar tactics of avoiding work, and cutting corners, and had similar attitudes to the role of managerial authority as their male co-workers in the same role. While women are often recognised as being more vulnerable to the insecurities of precarious work (Rubery, 2015) there were few qualitative differences between the responses of the two mothers, to the five fathers within the scope of this research: all of whom (both fathers and mothers) reported a higher experience of insecurity than respondents who did not have to support a family. While differences in gendered experiences of organisation at work are vital (Rubery, 2015; Dyer, McDowell, & Batnitzky, 2011; Malmusi, Borrell, & Benach, 2010; Hawkins, 2008), these gendered differences do not affect the importance, or likelihood, of smart work being used within the workplace in this research.

Conducting the Interviews

Data were collected through semi-structured, conversational interviews that went for no longer than 40 minutes. The 40 minute interview timeframe was established on the premise that interview participants would not likely agree to a time commitment of anything longer than an hour (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 77). Semi-structured interviews were used because they offered a flexible and

comprehensive form of data collection (Erikson, 2018; Lune & Berg, 2017; Holstein & Gubrium, 2016). By allowing participants to elaborate on a standard set of questions I was able to adjust the order and nature of follow-up questions to focus on implied obligations and responsibilities that became apparent from participant responses. All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of participants, with the exception of one in which the participant explicitly asked not to be recorded. Each interview was performed off-site at a venue of the participants choosing, and interview schedules were shared with my partner in an effort to keep track of my whereabouts during the research phase.

Since the interviews were designed to facilitate open-ended answers a standard script was used to prompt interview questions, however, I was able to digress and 'probe beyond the answers to my prepared questions' (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 69). Basic questions can be found in Appendix 1, and were structured around key themes of responsibility with the aim of understanding what structures of power authorised workers' behaviours in the workplace, and what structures organised or motivated worker behaviour (as discussed in Chapter Three). At the top of each interview sheet I include the general aim, and key research questions from my research to help prompt me when elaborating on questions on the spot to ensure a focused interview setting.

Each of the questions in the interview script was directed towards illuminating possible structures and processes that organise responsibility at work. Subsequently, earlier questions in the interview focus on workers' relationships to direct and contractual responsibilities (i.e. management, KPIs), whereas later questions, and sometimes follow-up questions, queried more social obligations (i.e. family, friends, colleagues) and more philosophical responsibilities (i.e. why do you work?). Most questions were organised around a three-tier question system to elucidate more considered responses from workers who were employed in monotonous work. The question system consisted of asking participants in threes: for instance, a question of 'what workers do at work' was asked in three different ways:

(i) What is your role at work?
(ii) What does your contract state you should do at work?
(iii) What do you [actually] do at work?

This tiered question system was important because it forced participants to reflect and question their own responsibilities and habits in the workplace. Such reflection is all the more necessary given the un/low-skilled, and often monotonous and routine nature of these jobs since it was necessary to avoid unconstructive responses that simply describe the contractual obligations (e.g. "I pack boxes"). Overall, the questions were designed to get workers to think about their day-to-day routine

and how they dealt with work beyond their contractual obligations. More specifically it was designed to get them to think about why they behave in certain ways, and what these behaviours hoped to achieve.

Self-Presentation

I am a 185cm, 100kg male with shoulder length dread-locks so my self-presentation was an important consideration when conducting interviews. As Lune and Berg (2017) explain, interview processes involve a performative element.

> It comes in how you choose to present yourself to the subject, how you manage the flow of conversation, how you seek to establish rapport with them. (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 66)

Subsequently, I was conscious to ensure a calm and unthreatening environment for interviews. Following proposals from Lune and Berg (2017, p. 88) I made sure to "never begin" the "interview cold", and took a few minutes before every interview to make small talk with the participant. In addition to this I always ensured to dress casually for interviews in an effort to generate a casual, and informal atmosphere for the interviews. I dressed in casual long blue jeans, and a red button up flannelette shirt and had my hair neatly tied back. On meeting each participant I took care to introduce myself as a member of the University of Queensland, briefly introduce my research and hand out, and talk through, a participant's information sheet with the participants. I made sure my language was casual, and never academic. As mentioned early, gatekeepers played an important role in not just recruiting participants for interviews, but also in ensuring that participants knew what to expect in the interviews (Crowhurst, 2013; Turner & Almack 2017).

Analysing and Thematising the Data

Data analysis was performed both manually, and using Nvivo software. In both cases, however, the analytical process used was the same. Analysis consisted of organising worker responses into forms of responsibility in line with the conceptual definitions addressed in Chapter Three. Central to this approach was the conceptualisation of responsibility in accordance with Derrida's (1995) conceptualisation. As explained in Chapter Three, Derrida's notion of responsibility connects the theme of resistance to social interactions of individual beings with others. In a similar fashion, my research project aims to critically examine the structures that individual workers draw upon, and utilise to organise their behaviour at work; with a specific focus on the manner in which they respond to the threat of insecurity. Here workers' subjectivity is deconstructed through an analysis of the way they relate to their obligations and responsibilities. Responsibilities that deviated from traditional structures of power and authority were noted in my data collection.

Key themes in data analysis, or analytic categories, were coded in accordance with a basic analysis of discursive themes with the intention of highlighting various forms of responsibilities (Lune & Berg, 2017, pp. 191-192). Key analytic categories were identified on two fronts. First, key themes were organised around specific responsibilities like "key performance indicators", "friends", "family", "management" that emerged organically from the findings. Second, these themes were juxtaposed against Postanarchist themes of "direct action", "decentralisation", and "anti-authoritarianism" and the results were presented in the findings chapters (Chapters Five, Six, and Seven).

The findings chapters were organised according to the recurring theme of 'smart work' that emerged naturally throughout the interview practice. The theme of smart work emerged explicitly in 19 of the 30 interviews, and can be inductively read into specific responses from the other 11 interviews. Smart work emerges in these contexts as an obligation, or responsibility, of each worker to behave in accordance with an epistemological framework of 'being smart'; the analytical task of this thesis has been to understand the socio-political nature of this framework.

Ethics

Several ethical considerations had to be understood and mitigated. Three key ethical concerns were identified concerning the ethical consent of participants, maintaining participant anonymity, and the incentivisation of participants with cash. A justification, and response to each of these concerns is listed below.

Participant Consent

Consent was gathered from participants prior to the start of each interview. On arrival to the interview venue participants were greeted, and handed $20 cash. A participant information sheet (Appendix 2) was then issued to participants and participants were taken through the sheet to ensure they understand the merits of the research. Following this, an ethical consent form was presented to the participants (Appendix 3) and key ethical aspects were explained to participants before requesting their signature in acknowledgement of the information, and their rights (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 46; Mason, 2002, pp. 100-101). The ethical consent forms, once collected, were stored in a secure filing cabinet that is locked at all times to ensure participant anonymity.

Anonymity

A central concern conducting this research off-site, and without the sanction of respective management was protecting the identity and information shared by participants. The potential risk of exposing worker identities, and even workplace identities was reasonable and something that could result in participants of my research losing their job (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 48; Ryen, 2016,

p. 53; Cresswell, 2013, p. 165). Given the nature of the research explores daily and routine activities of workers, with a specific focus on any 'alternate' responsibilities to those of the official administration, it was important to keep my participants, and their responses, anonymous. Any compromised worker identities might have divulged workplace secrets, as well as deviant and even unlawful behaviour (like drug use or theft) that were expressed in the interviews (Mason, 2002, p. 101; Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 40; Ryen, 2016, p. 53). To protect participants and guarantee a free and anonymous interview process, the audio recordings were personally transcribed within 10 days of the interview, after which all audio records were deleted. Transcripts were immediately de-identified, using pseudonyms for people and places to maintain a personal, and human quality to the transcripts.

Interviews took place off-site at a venue agreed upon between the participant and myself. Interview venues were split fairly evenly between a local pub, café, or restaurant that was in the vicinity of the participants' worksite, with only three interviews taking place in a private residence. Most interviews took place directly after a work shift, with the exception of one interview that was performed at 8:30pm after the participant had put her children to bed. Where private residences were used, a measure of safety was ensured by arranging with my partner to call me if I had not contacted her within 1.5 hours of starting an interview (Ryen, 2016; Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 115).

Cash Incentives

The use of a cash incentive has been justified by Leung, Ho, Chan, Johnston, & Wong (2002) as the most cost-effective intervention for incentivising participants and stimulating low response rates. Such a method was essential to my research because of the degree of separation between the research team, and the desired participants. More precisely, the incentivisation of participants was important because it alleviated the pressure on my gatekeepers to recruit participants in the private sphere of their workplaces (Turner & Almack, 2017; Crowhurst, 2013). On top of this, a pragmatic justification of reimbursement for time was considered important for working-class participants for offering their time for the research. While some ethical concerns exist regarding the possibility of cash incentivisations to fund 'high-risk' behaviour (e.g. substance abuse) recent research from Festinger and Dugosh (2012, p. 45) suggest that these incentives are far more likely to contribute to paying bills, savings, or household goods. Moreover, significant research supports the use of cash incentives over in-kind incentives (Ryu, Couper, & Marans, 2005; Leung, Ho, Chan, Johnston, & Wong, 2002; Warriner, Goyder, Gjertsen, Hohner, & McSpurren, 1996) and, subsequently, there is ample reason to use cash in the research. Given the Australian minimum working wage for casual employees is $23 an hour, a cash incentive of $20 for a 40 minute interview seems both fair, and reasonable (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2017).

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the mechanisms that organised my collection and interpretation of data in this research. Central to this research method is a case study that interrogates the nature of responsibility amongst insecure workers. I have explained how my research process utilises gatekeepers to recruit participants, and why a chain-referral sampling method was essential to gather and compare a variety of worker responses within each cohort. Moreover, I have explained how this methodical approach to the research is informed by an interpretivist methodology that draws from a Postanarchist theoretical framework.

I have also explained how themes of responsibility were coded into analytic categories in accordance with the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Three. This framework and Derrida's conceptualisation of responsibility was vital to the coding process, as well as the formulations of questions throughout the interview processes because they identified structures of authority that organise workers. Questions in the interviews were directed around semi-structured methods to investigate individual workers' relationships to these structures of authority, from where the responses could be compared against other responses within a working cohort. Once these structures could be established they were presented as forms of authority that oblige workers, and of which they could be deemed 'responsible-to'. The final section of this chapter detailed the ethical considerations that were fundamental to this research project. While I acknowledge that cash incentives for participation are contested in research, I argue they were essential to this particular project because they both incentivized participation, as well as alleviating responsibility from my gatekeepers.

Overall, this chapter outlines the mechanisms that structure my research project. It explains how I critically tested responsibility by interviewing 30 insecure workers from across Brisbane. This chapter is essential to the following findings chapters because it helps situate and contextualise the findings that will be considered in the wider content of the sociological and political problems outlined in Chapter Two and Three. Moreover, this chapter explains how I operationalised Postanarchist theory into an empirical sociological study. The findings from the data will be explored and presented in the following chapters.

Chapter 5: Precarity and Deviance at Work

This chapter is the first of the three findings chapters and attempts to orient and describe the precarious relationship workers share with their work environment. More than just describe this relationship, however, this chapter aims to illustrate the ambiguous nature of deviance that emerges across field sites as workers struggle to secure their otherwise precarious relationship to work. This chapter will examine the practices in which individual workers deviate from prescribed managerial policies as I demonstrate how these methods are largely subversive, informal, and self-organised and are thus distinct from any form of collective struggle or movement against work.

This chapter will be split into two parts. The first part outlines the specific mechanisms through which workers come to experience insecurity. More specifically it outlines how workers experience insecurities in conjunction with the nature of their contractual responsibilities, as well as the manner in which work space, and work time, is organised. The second section more closely explores the antagonism(s) between insecurity and security. It illustrates the manner in which workers utilise powerful structures at work (such as KPIs) to authorise, or justify, deviant behaviour. I illustrate how these deviant behaviours prove valuable for creating new avenues for the workers in which to share social experiences. Nevertheless, while these deviant practices have beneficial qualities, I also illustrate their precarious qualities; namely that such behaviour is often individualised, and contributes to the further embodiment of anxiety and insecurity.

Grounding the Experience of Precarity.

As illustrated in chapter two, the implementation of non-standard forms of employment (NFSE) in this most recent, neoliberal, era has had a significant effect on reorganising the experiences of workers. One very important sociological effect of this has been the shift in work responsibility from employers onto employees. Rubery (2015, p. 637) argues that as employers move to contract based employment, "staff are expected to work for as long as required to complete their tasks and responsibilities". More specifically, she argues that as employment contracts shift away from the standard employment relationship (i.e. 8 hours a day, 38 hours a week) the meaning of work 'time' changes for those subject to these working conditions (2005). Rubery suggests that the legal, and collective regulation of NSFEs around the world lends itself to the fragmentation of workers as core and periphery activities within a workplace are separated and located in different organisations (2015, p. 638). "This fragmentation not only affects how work is organised and experienced but also introduces ambiguity in regard to which organisation is the responsible employer" (Rubery, 2015, p. 639). As such, Rubery argues, employers have become less accountable, as employees become unclear as "to whom they should show loyalty or commitment" (2015, p. 639). This

ambiguous relationship between workers and their workplaces was frequently reflected in my interviews as workers detailed experiences of frustration, and anxiety about their role at work. The following section will detail the extent of these anxieties as workers illustrate their precarious experience of work as well as their experience of time at work as a result of the contractual association to work.

Contractual Precarity

Casual employment was uniformly implemented across all field sites in the research. Under Australian law, casual employment means that (with the exception of any enterprise bargaining agreements) employees are not guaranteed (i) any minimum hours a week, (ii) paid sick or annual leave, (iii) a minimum period of notification before the termination of employment (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2018). However, in exchange for this lack of financial security, casual workers receive an hourly rate that is 25 per cent higher than their permanent colleagues. Some casual workers are also entitled to extra rates of pay for shift work, although none of those interviewed in this research qualitied as shift workers. Ultimately workers are compensated for their lack of ongoing security with a higher wage. The ABS (The Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010) reports 20 per cent of the Australian labour force to be employed on a casual, or self-employed basis while other government sources situate the number towards 25 per cent of the workforce (Australian Government, 2015). Within the scope of my research, 90 per cent of participants were employed on a casual part-time basis and the remaining 10 per cent had full-time, permanent employment.

Despite the higher hourly wages associated with casual employment many theorists suggest that casual work offers far fewer benefits than permanent work. Mooi-Reci and Wooden (2017) found that there is no evidence of any long-term pay benefit for casual workers in comparison to permanent employees. So too do Healy and Nicholson (2017) argue that the cost of a casual job outweighs the advantage of the higher pay once workers take into account the lack of paid leave and insecurity they face in a market "characterised by high underemployment and intensifying job competition". Another key factor in understanding the problem facing precarious workers is the lack of a "secure work-based identity, as Standing (2011) summarises:

> It is not right to equate the precariat with the working poor or with just insecure employment, although these dimensions are correlated with it. The precariousness also implies a lack of a secure work-based identity, whereas workers in some low-income jobs may be building a career. (Standing, 2011, p. 9)

The point made by Gallie et al (2016) in Chapter Two concerning the "loss of job status security" is also an important element to understanding the emergence of precarity among the workers interviewed in my research. In fact, at many points throughout the interviews, the workers seem more concerned with the lack of recognition they receive for working, than they do with the lack of financial security they are afforded, which lends weight to the arguments from Standing (2011) and Gallie et al. (2016) in favour of job insecurity being more closely tied to a loss of job *status* than it is about a loss of permanent employment.

At the beginning of each interview I asked the participants about their contractual obligations to work. A frequent 'ice-breaking' question was about the terms of their employment; specifically whether they were employed on a casual, permanent basis. While most workers responded by stating they were employed 'permanently' after some further discussion, they proved to be on a casual contract because they were paid by the hour, and did not receive sick or holiday pay. While the participants appeared unfazed about being on casual contracts when asked directly, sentiments of uncertainty and anxiety were visible throughout later extracts. For instance, Luis (M, 27) is a picker at site two; while he did not seem concerned about his casual contract, about halfway through the interview he admitted:

> Luis: …It is pretty touch and go. Because we are all causals everyone is replaceable. It doesn't matter how good you are.
>
> PJ: that's probably a good point to talk about. So is everyone else casual there, too? Even the admin and stuff?
>
> Luis: No, probably about 75 per cent of the staff are causally contracted and some of them are in the admin positions. But most of them are on the warehouse floor. Most of the admin positions are taken by the permanents though.
>
> PJ: So do most people work full time though?
>
> Luis: Sure. If you're a good worker you can or will get eight hours a day every week. If you start slacking off without any reasons then you will get put on "standby". Which is code for "we'll never call you back".

These comments were typical for most of the interviews from each site that display a concern, or insecurity, around the low skilled nature of the work. More specifically, there is evidence of a meritocratic ideology here that 'if you are a good worker, you will get regular work'. However, there is a conflict in Luis' sentiments between 'regular work' and the idea that 'everyone is

replaceable…no matter how good you are'. It is a contradiction that casts doubt on the meritocracy of these unskilled, or low-skilled industries. In a similar situation, Dallas (M, 38), who packs orders for site 4, makes a similar [contradictory] justification, albeit more consciously:

> PJ: yeah, its [casualisation] like that at quite a few places. Why is that?
>
> Dallas: well you're a liability to them, I guess. You know, permanent staff get paid holidays, sick leave, maternity – all that shit. So to get made permanent you gotta prove to them that you won't fuck 'em over.
>
> PJ: right. Do you think that's fair though? I mean, how do you prove this?
>
> Dallas: exactly. My point exactly. I've been here 18 months, you know. It's like "where's my fucking contract man". I've never fucked 'em over, I've never stolen anything…

Both statements from Dallas and Luis show evidence of a level of precarity in the workplace with regards to a lack of confidence in their employment conditions. It is noted through the perception of inequality — through the manner in which Dallas, in particular, recognises that after 18 months of satisfying his employer he still has yet to prove himself and attain a sense of trust and security through work. Consequently, precarity emerges as a social insecurity as much as it does as an economic insecurity. Moreover, there is evidence here of a fragmented worker that Rubery identified above, in which workers like Luis and Dallas become distrustful of management, as well as their commitment to work (2015). A similar condition of precariousness was also essential to Standing's (2011) definition of precarity in which:

> The precariat does not feel part of a solidaristic [sic] labour community. This intensifies a sense of alienation and instrumentality in what they have to do…There is no 'shadow of the future' hanging over their actions, to give them a sense that what they say, do or feel today will have a strong or binding effect on their longer-term relationships". (Standing, 2011, p. 12)

Standing's theory is supported by the evidence from Luis and Dallas who each internalise their contractual insecurity as a meritocratic problem rather than a more systematic issue of contractual uncertainty.

Precarity and Time, and KPIs

The organisation and regulation of 'time' also plays an important role in increasing the experience of precarity and insecurity for workers. A central part of the experience of work, Hearn and Michelson (2005, p. 20) remind us is that 'time and space' are re-constructed by working environments to discipline ideas of productivity. While their argument has clear reference to

Taylorism/Fordism, it also echoes Creswell's (2006, p. 4) historical recognition of Kant's [1800] argument that "time and space…are the fundamental axes around which life revolves". Such a distinction leads Cresswell to argue that space and time — in the workplace — were compressed to the point where workers' mobility was similarly compressed. He says:

> Time and space, it has been argued, have been taken out of the world of nature and immediate experience and placed, instead, in the world of abstraction – abstraction ruled, for the most part, by the demands of trade and capital, but also by various forms of patriarchy, colonialism, and imperialism. (Cresswell, 2006, p. 5)

Hearn and Michelson (2006, p. 19) argue similarly that as time at work becomes more regulated so too does the "intrinsic value of an identity — and time — beyond work" become more regulated.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were a common means of structuring the time of participants. While all sites utilised KPIs, both retail stores (site 1 and 5) had different KPIs for different departments, and thus some participants experienced different conditions to others, depending on which section of work they were in. Smith (2001) argues that the ontological entity of an organisation is dependent on the production and reproduction of documentation, rules, and regulations through which she argues that texts and documents "mediate, regulate, and authorize people's activities" (p. 160). "It is the constancy" Smith continues "of the text that provides for the standardization effect…that establish[s] a shared and enforceable common ground…across multiple settings" (2001, pp. 175-176). So too do Moore and Robinson (2016) theorise a central characteristic of organisation of work in the neoliberal era to be one around which bodies are subordinated to "technologies and specific precarious logics" (p. 2776). Of these logics, they focus on the rise of "self-tracking" devices, and the role of technological surveillance in 'paradoxically' "removing explicit control over" but also guaranteeing work (Moore & Robinson, 2016, p. 2777). While they argue that "psychologically, the main effect of such quantification is rising anxiety" they admit that the sociological effects are a "quantified, machine-like image of human productivity" (Moore & Robinson, 2016, p. 2778). While the machine-like instrumentality of human labour has been a subject of much interest in Marxist literature since the industrial era, theorists like Lazzarato (2014), Berardi (2009) and Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that neoliberalism has been more detrimental to the production of subjectivity in our recent era. Lazzarato argues that neoliberalism "has destroyed precarious social relations and their forms of subjectivation (worker, communist, or social-democrat subjectivation or national subjectivity, bourgeois subjectivity, etc.)" (2014, p. 8). Instead he argues that:

> Today, the weakness of capitalism lies in the production of subjectivity. As a consequence, systemic crisis and the crisis in the production of subjectivity are strictly interlinked. It is impossible to separate economic, political, and social processes from the processes of subjectivation occurring within them. (Lazzarato, 2014, p. 8)

Lazzarato continues:

> Today, the ubiquity of entrepreneurial subjectivation, manifest in the drive to transform every individual into a business, has resulted in a number of paradoxes. The autonomy, initiative, and subjective commitment demanded of each of us constitute new norms of employability and, therefore, strictly speaking, a heteronomy. At the same time, the injunction imposed on the individual to act, take the initiative, and undertake risks has led to widespread depression, a *maladie du siecle*, the refusal to accept homogenization, and, finally, the impoverishment of existence brought on by the individual "success" of the entrepreneurial model. (Lazzarato, 2014, p. 9)

A similar critique of neoliberal capitalism's deterioration of human subjectivity is produced by Fleming (2017) who is critical of the costs of investment and risks that individual workers are encouraged to take in contemporary work. He argues that the organisation of neoliberal work is such that "Employment is being fundamentally *individualized* so that the costs of labour (that firms once covered) are pushed onto the employee with the help of labour-on-demand business models, self-employment, portfolio careers and zero-hours contracts" (Fleming, 2017, p. 692). KPIs serve a similar role for those interviewed. While workers were not "self-employed" as those in more 'uberised' roles, many were employed by a labour hire company, rather than the company they worked for which increases the effect of fragmentation that Rubery (2015) outlines above. Those employed by the sites in which they operated also showed evidence of individualisation, and mechanisation that Lazzarato and Fleming detail. For example, Rhys (M, 34) was a picker from site 2 who illustrates the manner in which KPIs serve to render his position at work insecure. Central to this precarious experience is the manner in which time constraints, while uniform to all workers, are internalised on an individual level. More specifically, precarity becomes evident in the way that management expects Rhys to organise himself around other workers on the shop-floor.

> Rhys: …it's all about KPIs.
>
> PJ: I was just about to ask you about that. You'd certainly be on a KPI?

Rhys: yeah, you've got to pick certain amounts cause if you pick underneath that for too long you'll get dragged into the office and posed the question..."oh why aren't you hitting target" which I've had that a little while ago…

PJ: so that was just a systematic way of getting a talking-to, to make sure everything's all right? Like once you get pulled into the office it's not like you're automatically put on a warning or anything right?

Rhys: Oh, yeah. I was given a blunt sort of warning. It was just before Christmas and they said — the project manager sort of thing, the dude who is above our supervisors was like — "why aren't you hitting it" you know. All that. I gave him a few reasons and I think he just [pauses] they more or less just see the figures side of things. Like they don't see the things that slow us down. Like health and safety type thing [pauses] if someone's in a high reach forklift grabbing something from up high you've got to say like two bays back. Wait for them to drop their stuff down, then if you've got someone on an LO[4] in front of you too, and they've had to go up to a certain height [pauses] if they hit that height or above you've got to stay a metre or two bays away and wait for them to pick and come down before you can go around them. Just sometimes you can get three machines in an aisle or four machines. And you know normally that shit will slow you down.

PJ: that seems, well is that something that everyone observes now? Or do…

Rhys: yeah, there is a certain amount of leeway for it. Yeah, some people can be arrogant. You know they won't care. Like they'll get their pallet, come down, and instead of like pulling to the side to let you through, they'll stay blocking the aisle. It might take 'em only a minute. You know that's their throwback. But you know if it happens six or seven times that like ten minutes out of my time which affects my figures.

PJ: yeah, that sounds really fucking annoying, man.

Rhys: it is!

Time clearly figures heavily in the organisation of Rhys' experience at work. More to the point, while each of the workers in this site share similar KPIs, Rhys details a largely individualised experience. That is to say that the responsibility to meet KPIs seems to be solely the task of the worker, as far as Rhys and his management team are concerned.

[4] An LO refers to a 'load shifting order picker'. It is similar to a forklift, except it is the reverse; the human stands in the fork section and is lifted up (similar to a scissor lift) so they can pick/pack an order from a pallet. LO's are typically narrower than a forklift and can be maneuvered up and down narrow isles to grant access to industrial shelves.

Similar internalisations of KPIs were identified across both warehouse sites (2 and 4) as well as the assembly line in site 3. The assembly line, however, had a noticeably friendlier — but still insidious ethic of individual production that viewed production as a 'game' or 'competition' between workers. Kellin (M, 27) works on a conveyor belt fixing up used "hardware"[5] in site 3, here he details the 'healthy competition' between workers that stimulates production.

> PJ: right so you have a KPI for pallets fixed per hour?
>
> Kellin: yep, totally. So, every now and then we'll try to make it fun and have a pissing contest between each other.
>
> PJ: 'healthy' competition?
>
> Kellin: Exactly, exactly. Originally we had our own machinery for our own benches. So we could drop the stacks and manipulate it the way we stand. But now it's a big communal stack and everything gets delivered down the line to us. So the way things are…
>
> PJ: right, they've micro-managed the system so that they'll drop the [hardware] off outside and then another person will move them to you guys?
>
> Kellin: no. All the [hardware] are now delivered to one place that sorts 'em out. Then they come to us already in the assembly line. And we'll be standing there so that everyone gets their [hardware] served to them. It was supposed to make the system more even. So before we had four different tippers so whoever was on the fork lift could –if they didn't like someone – they would just drop 'em the shit; the dirtiest smashed up [hardware]. Whereas if they liked someone they would offload all the good stuff that don't really need much fixing so that they could pump 'em through, get big numbers. Get the pat on the back from the boss and a high five. And old mate [the boss] will be like 'what the fuck were you doing' today (to the other worker). But at the same time, you can still (with the new system) – if you are at the start – you can see something shit coming [and step out of the line to avoid it].

While Kellin shows a lot more interest and humour in his line of work, he nevertheless, shares the same narrative of individualization at work. By being rewarded individually, as well as being able to 'avoid' arduous processes, Kellin highlights the highly individualised experience of time and work.

[5] I use the term 'hardware' as a non-specific term to de-identify the nature of production in site 3 so as to ensure the anonymity of the workers interviewed.

The experience of time was even more subtle in the retail stores (sites 1 and 5) because KPIs were less explicit, and more dependent on where each person was working in each shift. These variations however, had a similar effect on individualising worker experiences because it created a sense of uncertainty about whether each worker was working hard enough. Indigo (M, 30ish) works at site 1 as a shop assistant and shows that while they are not subject to specific KPIs, they still nevertheless, have to internalise an appropriate production ideal.

PJ: so do you have any KPIs in fresh produce?

Indigo: not necessarily, but there are. Like with the night time stock which is probably more my main role the day staff will start at 4am will expect a certain amount of things done when they get in.

PJ: is it likely that if you don't get that stuff done that someone will come and have a word to you?

Indigo: yeah, they'll ask why these things weren't done. Which has happened.

PJ: yep. So I imagine [site 1] will be pretty tight on their whole management policies?

Indigo: I think fresh produce is a little more flexible but I guess there's an expectation of certain things getting done.

PJ: yeah right. So in an average day at work. Do you mainly just get told what jobs to get done? Or do you come in the morning and have a set agenda?

Indigo: with fresh produce there's more independence. Sometimes there's a department managers who's not always there. And they are usually never there at night. And there's somebody who they're training into a manager underneath them. Which they have now. I guess you could say he's a 2IC [second in charge]. Who might say 'hey, can you do this'. But generally, you just find out what we need… and go out and get it. But you might be assigned a certain section. So I might be responsible for the wall and two of the boys will be responsible for the box.

PJ: so you just keep an eye on that and go back and forth?

Indigo: yeah.

PJ: is there much down time then? You know if the days going slowly and everything's stocked.

Indigo: I don't think there's ever a time where there's not something to do.

Instead of clear production quotas, Indigo suggests that they have more control over their own organisational process. However, as Indigo points out – they have daily deadlines around which they have to 'get a certain amount of things done'. Thus, while this process takes a different shape to those of Rhys or Kellin's KPIs, Indigo is nevertheless still subject to a form of output management that is used to quantify his productivity. Similarly, too, Indigo understands his production output to be his sole responsibility and thus he internalises these ideals of production.

A similar (precarious) internalisation of production and time was clear at the other retailer, site 5, where Basil (M, 19) works is a 'shop assistant' who works in a 'music department'. While Basil describes a similar organisational system to Indigo, Basil also suggests there are aspects of his work that are not quantified, but still require a level of attention. As such a central insecurity arises around the need to not only keep his sales figures up, but also keep the store orderly and clean.

> PJ: yep. So…ah, do you have quotas to measure your workload?
>
> Basil: Well not really. But we have sales counters. You know. So like when we help customers we give them a receipt that has our name on it. So that gets logged into the system. So that when the boss or whoever looks through the numbers they see the right numbers next to your name. So when the big wigs go through the system they want to see that you can carry your weight – because they don't work in the store. They don't see how you interact with customers, or how neatly ordered your sections are. They just see if you've made sales or not. So you gotta back yourself there. So in terms of KPIs or quotas that you've asked about we don't technically have one. But we have a system, you know. If you're not playing into the [company] system, you're shooting yourself in the foot. So it's really important to try to get on top of it.

Shortly after Basil adds:

> …Like if the shelves are stacked poorly the managers' gonna be like 'what the fuck have you been doing all day". And the same if you're an arsehole to everyone at work and the customers, they will eventually complain to the manager and you'll get the flick. So, it's one of these things where that's part of the job. It's a given, it's not a decider whether you are good or bad, but simple that you can adequately do the job…And making the sales is the extra step. You know, it's the 'excel' kind of factor. But if you can't stack the shelves then you're negligent – or useless.

While retail workers do not have as clearly defined KPIs as those who work in the warehouses or on the assembly line, they nevertheless share the experience and internalisation of insecurity with

regards to production output. The method around which time is organised in these sites therefore illustrates the fragmentation that is paramount to Rubery's (2015) account of change at work presented at the beginning of this section. Moreover, it supports Moore and Robinsons (2016) argument that contemporary workers find their subjectivity manufactured around a "quantified, machine-like image of human productivity" (p. 2778). Bevan and Hood (2006) also describe a similar production of subjectivity as important to neoliberal management practices through which "targets are sometimes kept secret" in an effort to promote self-discipline and self-regulation on behalf of those measured (p. 519). Central to this account is the 'granting of earned autonomy' that is exemplified by workers like Indigo, who appear to be successful under these conditions of performance measurement (Bevan & Hood, 2006, p. 519); that is to say, these workers appear to have the freedom of self-autonomy, as long as they meet their production criteria[6]. The result here appears to be a heightened sense of responsibility for these workers for the success or failure of their outputs at work. Subsequently, criticisms of the neoliberal workplace from Standing (2011) gather support here, as the evidence suggests a more individualised, anxious, and productive group of workers.

Deviance and the Struggle for Security

Despite this neoliberal internalisation of production quotas, workers frequently reported deviations from managerial imperatives and protocols. Central to these accounts were strategies in which participants actively tried to engage in a social experience at work by 'gaming the numbers'. While these struggles are by themselves nothing new to the workplace, the following sections will detail how they are uniquely experienced with regards to the individualised nature of the precarious worker. First I will present the struggle in which workers attempt to produce a more social experience of work, and second I will explore the way in which workers play the 'numbers game'.

The Struggle for the Social Realm of Work

When discussing her relationship to work, Skyler (F, 30), who works as a shop assistant at site 1 says that:

> It's like this. I'm getting paid 20 bucks for x amount of work. It's really fucking arguably valued at more. I mean in an hour behind the registers you can see that [site 1] has brought in an absurd amount of money. And if you compare that profit to us getting paid 20 bucks, you realise that it's pretty pathetic – the share of profits. So if anything, if we are talking about value of labour. You know the value of my time, for their money, I think a smart

[6] It is worth noting that Bevan and Hood explain the problem of such a system as one that inherently leads to gamification — which is a central theme in the following section.

> worker will realise pretty quickly that the best possible option would be to take it easy, and not kill yourself for the job where you're not getting any satisfaction. You're not getting pleasure. Profits. Rewards. Right, it's just logical...

When asked why she thinks this she replied "It's more about…trying to survive. Trying to make life better". In this push towards a more social experience in the workplace, Skyler invokes a belief shared by Marx that the abstraction of workers from meaningful work also affects their social reality:

> There is the production of human activity as *labour* — that is, as an activity quite alien to itself, to man and to nature, and therefore to consciousness and the expression of life — the *abstract* existence of man as a mere *workman* who may therefore daily fall from his filled void into the absolute void — into his social, and therefore actual, non-existence. (Marx, 1932, p. 37)

From this social abstraction of self, Marx goes on to argue that there is a need for the alienated worker to return to themselves as a "social (i.e., human) being" (1932, p. 43). While my research demonstrates a similar struggle of workers to return their experience of work to the social sphere, the interviews suggest that workers internalise this struggle on an individualistic basis, rather than the more communal struggle that Marx envisioned. For instance Corbin (M, 36) who packs orders onto pallets for shipping at site 4, agrees that human interaction is inseparable from the experience of work, and being-human:

> Corbin: yeah, it's pretty heads down bums up. You know we do have to get orders out onto trucks by a certain time. So you do have to work pretty quick to meet those deadlines. But at the same time, you know, yeah — of course — you're gonna have a chat and a laugh while you're doing it — when you can. I mean, we're only human right? I want to enjoy myself at work — or as much as possible.

Similarly, Ben (M, 34) — an assembly line worker at site 3 — agrees that the social element is essential to creating a more beneficial experience of work. However, he details a very individualised and separated experience of this social realm.

> PJ: …You know, what about others on the floor. Is there a comraderie? Do others struggle? Do you help each other?
>
> Ben: well, not really. I mean. Yeah, but everyone's in the same boat. We've all been there for a while now, so that you just do your own thing and cover your arse then go home.
>
> PJ: right, but you know the other guys there?

Ben: …it's hard to chat at work with all the noise around. But it's not like you're there by yourself all day. You know. We communicate, just not with words…

PJ: hah, right. Like sign language?

Ben: yeah, kinda. I mean, signing is pretty obvious [to management]. Normally with facial movements.

PJ: gestures?

Ben: yeah. You know, you might mouth out some words. Or pull a face or something.

While Ben is aware of the danger of being caught for being too "obvious" when communicating with other workers, he nevertheless recognises the importance of engaging with his fellow workers. At the same site, Terry (M, 36) more carefully explains the precarious nature of this (individualised) social experience as one that is necessary to avoid boredom.

PJ: cool. So like, What about your breaks, you get a couple throughout the day. From the sounds of it. Do you get to sit down with all the fellas and hang?

Terry: yes and no. Sometimes we'll chat, but a lot of the time the boys will sit around and play on their phone. Or text the missus or something. I mean it's not quiet; someone's always talking but yeah, it's not like we squabble the whole time like a bunch of parrots or anything.

PJ: Right, so like what would you say about a sense of community here? Do you feel tight with the workers?

Terry: yeah, like I'd happily have a yarn with anyone at work. But you know, they are work mates — not mate, mates. You know. We'll chat — but I'm not going to invite them over on Christmas or something. So yeah, I feel like we have a friendship — but without really being friends — or something.

PJ: yeah right. No — I get it. You get along fine, but you don't have the history or that connection you have with real mates.

Terry: yeah I mean that's it. Like you keep mates with the fellas at work because you gotta work with them. It's not that we agree about stuff — but we come to agreements because we don't want to start shit at work. It's too hard then. You can't work when you hate the people you gotta deal with day in and day out.

PJ: yeah, I get that. You've got to play the politician, right?

> Terry: yeah, I guess in a job like this where it is so simple — you've got to make sure that you don't screw yourself over by having shitty relationships. I mean, I feel like we are always interacting, even though we're not talking. You know. It's just us and a conveyor belt on the floor. So you try to keep everyone happy. It's pretty boring without that level of interaction, too, I guess. Like, if you're just [working] together, you get a bit bored.

Terry here responds to the absence of the social realm at work as she explains how important socialising is to avoid the monotony of the workplace. More specifically, interaction between workers (whether spoken, or embodied) plays a role here in stimulating and entertaining the workers in their otherwise "boring" work conditions. A similar, but slightly different account of this personal engagement with the social sphere was evident in site 5 where Damon (M, 38) works as a cashier. Here Damon draws on social engagement with customers rather than colleagues as a mechanism to increase his enjoyment of work.

> Damon: well often you try to stay busy. You know, paper work to sort — or order forms to compile. You know if you're working then time goes by quicker. But also, too, I might try and vary my conversations. You know customers can be a really good source of freedom in this job. I feel like those interactions get undervalued- because a few customers are arseholes — but customers can make life a hell of a lot more exciting if you ask the right questions
>
> PJ: what like tell them a joke or something? Ask them a question?
>
> Damon: yeah, anything really. Ask them about something beyond the ordinary. Something more meaningful.
>
> PJ: right than the weather?
>
> Damon: yeah.
>
> PJ: so what about your colleagues? Do they help when you're down too?
>
> Damon: yeah, they might. Sometimes I don't want to talk to them though, you know. Haha [Laughs awkwardly].

In each of these accounts socialising with colleagues, or customers, offers the workers a more *meaningful* avenue and adds to the beneficial experience of work overall. While each of these participants offers a different justification for engaging in the social realm, each of these accounts suggest that socialising at work is an important tool to combat boredom, monotony and isolation at work. As Korczynski (2011) and others have pointed out (in Chapter Two), each of these social

engagements occurs in the course of normal labour production, and suggests a minimal amount of deviation from standard managerial policy. Nevertheless, it is clear that without this social engagement workers would be far worse off in these work environments. Consequently, in the wider context of precarious work, this social engagement ought to be viewed as a proactive deviation from precarity, and subsequently, towards securing a more meaningful attachment to the working realm. This evidence lends its support to theorists like Deranty who suggests that work plays an important, and central, part of individual and social development (2015). Work, Deranty argues serves to illustrate the dual effects of suffering, and struggle against (capitalistic) domination. He says:

> Even though work so far has historically always been organized under general conditions of domination, underneath the general structure of domination, so to speak, work has also provided focal points for the organization of movements against domination. (Deranty, 2015, p. 119)

In a similar fashion, so too do these workers demonstrate the struggle against the isolating effects of contemporary work as they struggle to find social meaning and purpose in the otherwise monotonous procedures of their respective workplaces. Perhaps more pertinently, each of these struggles is conceptualised within these interviews as a personal struggle rather than a more collective struggle against the precarious forces of contemporary capitalism. Nevertheless, as I detail in the rest of this chapter, and will emphasise over the remainder of the thesis, these individual experiences are not only widely experienced throughout my findings, but they also direct and inform the interactions of these "individualised" workers who respond to, and struggle against the structures of work that atomise and alienate them. "Otherwise put", says May in a chapter entitled 'Friendship as Resistance' (2013):

> There are friendships that can cut against what neoliberalism is making of us. I can only gesture at the idea here, but its importance lies in this: that inasmuch as neoliberalism infiltrates our lives to make of us figures that in turn reinforce its grip, we can use those lives to resist that infiltration and thus create alternatives to whom we are being asked to be. (May, 2013, p. 64)

The Numbers Game

The widespread implementation of KPIs across the field sites often served as a structure that both organised worker behaviour, but also served to structure and direct deviant behaviour. Bevan and

Hood (2006, p. 533) theorise this process as one of 'reactive gaming' in which they argue that the strict use of "governance by targets" is likely to exacerbate responses of workers to manipulate, or *game*, the system. In the interviews, where KPIs were used to quantify the work, as well as the working subject, workers often utilised the "numbers game" to justify more workplace activities. That is, the strict implementation of quantifiably measurable KPIs served workers as a structure around which to both organise and manipulate. One picker at site 2, Jonas (M, 32), explains that he uses his hourly KPIs to avoid taking responsibility for unfinished work. When asked if he ever 'struggles to get through' his daily work he replied:

> Jonas: ugh. Yes and no. I mean I normally get through my KPIs 'cause they are hourly and not too bad. But you know. If you're talking about, um, my work load. I mean yeah. Sometimes we'll be backlogged. For instance, today I basically did a bunch of work from Friday. You know…Left over orders of things that weren't unpacked. Things the night shift guys hadn't done yet. Um yeah. So in the sense, yeah we struggle to get on top of the orders. But that's not really *my* [emphasis in original] problem. You know. Like as far as I'm employed, I'm only employed to hit my KPIs so as long as I hit my numbers, you know, I can't get in trouble.

Here Jonas explains that as long as he satisfies the desired 'numbers', he satisfies his work responsibility and cannot be held responsible for anything else that goes on in the workplace. Such a perspective suggests that while Jonas is invested in his particular workstation, he is disengaged, or at least actively separates himself from a broader and more general set of work responsibilities. This point will be pursued in the later chapters, however, what is important here is the manner in which Jonas organises his time around *his* KPIs. In a similar fashion, Kellin (M, 27) an assembly line worker from site 3, explains that while they are not formally facilitated, his work colleagues are allowed to take an hourly break so long as they hit the numbers.

> Kellin: We used to get a five minute break every hour. Have a drink, check your phone. Sit down. Reply to the missus, that sort of shit. But once e the cooler weather settled in — which is also our busy period — they took that off us, and it's not a 2 ½ hour stint.
>
> PJ: right.
>
> Kellin: but everyone seems to go grab a drink of water at the half way mark — so I guess that hasn't changed, it's not just official anymore.
>
> PJ: but the manager doesn't seem to mind as long as everyone gets back to work afterwards?

> Kellin: yeah if we are standing around scratching our balls then it might be an issue. But it all comes down to whether we hit the numbers…and we hit the numbers.

Thus, for Kellin and his colleagues at site 3, the KPIs serve a function to justify breaks for the workers as long as they maintain effective production outputs. Such a process reflects the uptake of 'team work' managerial processes that have been frequently implemented in contemporary times because they offer an increased sense of 'flexibility' for workers, while maintaining standard production quotas (Edgell, 2012, p. 53). Thus, while Kellin's behaviour at site 3 suggests a less deviant form of divergence from managerial policy, it demonstrates the use of KPIs to orient worker responses in these worksites. A more defiant case of deviance, arises from Rhys (M, 34), a picker at site 2, who details the process in which he manipulates KPIs to their advantage.

> Rhys: once we've been there for a while we can dodgy up — well not dodgy up — but you can sort of, yeah dodgy, up your times a little bit — you know to make it look a little bit better. Which is not too bad. Cause if you pick a book — say today I had…had 40 lines or whatever, and I managed to get it done within the hour sort of thing, so I — you know — bloody knew it was a good time but I still added 5 minutes to say that it took me 5 minutes longer so that it gave me a 5 minute leeway or head start on the next book. So you can kind of work it like that. 'Cause at the end of the day you've got to like — it's not compulsory — but they like you to do a 15 minutes clean up. So yeah, you can sort of work it in so that when you finish your last book there will only be 25 minutes at the end of the day so you can write down that you go straight to clean up [rather than the extra book] and you can boost down the aisle and break down boxes for a bit…So you can structure it to work in your advantage. But, in saying that, the team leaders do come down the isles every hour or so to look at the books and report back to the head boss where everyone's sitting at – at how far off target we are sitting and all that shit…'Cause they've got certain targets to hit, you know with certain stores…

Here Rhys explains that by marginally shifting (slowing down) documented completion times in their paperwork, Rhys manages to save 10-15 minutes from designated work-time. That is, he manages to free some time away from the otherwise strict management. A similarly deviant process of 'fiddling' was performed at the retail stores, too. For example, at site 1 Xin (M, mid-30s) who works as a 'shop assistant', explains that not only do they "fudge" up duties to complete the tasks in time, but that such 'corner cutting' on tasks is often necessary to meet time-limits.

> Xin: um. Yeah, well the classic example is you've got an hour to unpack. And you keep getting customers coming over and saying like "can you point me towards the eggs" or "can

you tell me if these are gluten free?" and it's like "fuck, read the label" But of course, that's part of the job. We have to smile politely and point them in the right direction. So yeah. Sometimes you miss your quotas because you are doing the right thing. And that sucks. It really does.

PJ: right. Because, I guess, the responsibilities take you both ways to the customer and then also to the quota. Right?

Xin: yeah, that's right. I've got to get the job done because otherwise I look bad.

PJ: yeah, but you get around that right? I mean it sounds like you haven't got in trouble yet?

Xin: well I suspect I'm in a lucky position where I've been here long enough to get away with certain things. But you know, sometimes when you want to stack the shelves you might…the shelves have to be presented in a certain fashion…

PJ: yeah right. Labels out. Neatly stacked.

Xin: yeah, that's right. But you can kind fudge it a bit. It's tricky but you can kinda shave some things at the back or on top of the shelves. You'll get caught eventually, but if you're careful it won't matter. So you can do that quickly and get through stock a bit faster. You know if you need to unload some stock quickly…

Here Xin illustrates the intertwined, and ambiguous, nature of precarity and deviance in the workplace. That, in order to survive workers need to deviate from standard managerial policy; both in terms of achieving 'free-time', but also — sometimes — in order to get work done. At site 4, Corbin (M, 35) also reports deviant behaviour as being important to get work done quicker, as he reports operating a forklift without a license as an important process in which to meet his KPIs.

PJ: so if work told you that you couldn't drive the forklift because you weren't qualitied, would you still do it? You know to make work easier?

Corbin: yeah. Probably. I mean it really does save a heap of time if I can do it then and there rather than getting 3 people to help me unpack a pallet or waiting for the other drivers to come back from whatever they're doing.

Like Xin, Corbin admits that deviating from workplace policy — and in this case the law — to operate a forklift is important. Perhaps most importantly, this display of deviance highlights the ambiguous, and problematic, connection between deviance and the labour process. As emphasised in chapter two, while workers struggle against aspects of work, they nevertheless do so in accordance with the production and maintenance of the labour process. Such a connection is

important to the conceptualisation of precarious, and insecure work because it emphasises the individualised experience of not just work itself, but also of deviant responses to such work. That is to say that while KPIs are internalised on an individual basis as a means of quantifying a relationship to work, the manner in which workers challenge and struggle against these KPIs also occurs on an individualised level. This individualised experience of work contributes to the overarching experience of precarity and insecurity in the contemporary workplace, as many have pointed out, because it signals an intensification of alienation, disenfranchisement and anxiety amongst workers (Brook, 2009; Berardi, 2009; Lazzarato, 2014; Fleming, 2014). The effect of this experience, adds Deranty (2008) is that precariousness emerges as workers become isolated from others, as well as from the meaningful association to work. He says:

> …the psychological effect of this precarisation (of existence in the workplace) encourages subjects to individualise and insulate their own experience, and thus to close themselves off from narratives and practices of solidarity and contestation. (Deranty, 2008, p. 461)

Standing also reports on the widespread effects of "psychological detachment" alongside stress and insecurity in our contemporary era of work (2011, p. 58). Accompanying these anxious internalisations are threats to workers' ability to learn as well as adapt to the "delayed downward adjustment of living standards brought about by globalization" says Standing (2011, p. 175). The effects of this psychological foreclosure will figure heavily in the following as I demonstrate the dimensions upon which workers not only rely on each other, but also each other's knowledge and experience to generate possible realms of behaviour. Thus, while this chapter paints a bleak picture of the field sites and the workers who took part in this research, the following chapters will present more promising accounts of social and political communication across these cohorts.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the experience of insecurity, and precarity as it emerges across the field sites utilised in this research. Central to this task has been grounding the experience of insecurity in the materialisation of contractual agreements, as well as the organisation of time in these field sites. Time has been largely organised around KPIs in which individual workers are held individually accountable for their work output. A fundamental effect of this organisation of time, I have argued throughout this chapter has been the marginalisation of individual workers from others — which serves to further increase the internalisation of anxiety, insecurity, and the experience of precarity.

A central experience of precarity has been the internalisation of organisational behaviour from workers. Central to this process is one in which individual workers deviate from organisational standards in an effort to either create more social, or free time — or get work done *on time.* In both

scenarios of deviance, I argue that precarity is *also* reproduced in the sense that workers take upon themselves the responsibility of getting caught for being deviant. That is, that these responses by workers increase the overall experience of precariousness at work because they often lead workers to perform something they are not supposed to do. Moreover, this precarity is exacerbated as I have demonstrated if workers *need* to cut corners to satiate KPIs.

Overall, I have argued that precarity emerges in this chapter on two fronts; both as a result of management, but also as a social response from workers. While the two fronts cannot be separated, the following chapter will examine this social response in more detail. Central to this examination, I argue are mutual social obligations and responsibilities that systematically (although not collectively) force responses from management and serve as valuable mechanisms to reduce the experience of precariousness and insecurity amongst these workers. These obligations serve to highlight the importance of a particular form of responsibility that deviant workers adopt which is known as self-responsibility.

Chapter 6: Responsibility at Work

This second findings chapter draws from findings presented in the previous chapter as it locates the responsibilities of deviant workers. It will present the formation of a form of *self*-responsibility as it emerges throughout the findings as a direct effect from the experience of insecurity. Such analysis of responsibility serves to identify and address the strategic and political effects of insecurity as they reorganise the working sphere. Thus, they are essential for explaining how workers respond to insecurity. Two forms of self-responsibility are identified within the findings in this chapter: first I present findings in which workers believed they 'rejected' work responsibilities in order to balance their work-life balance, and second, I present what I argue is a more active and genuine (according to my Derridean framework) form of responsibility that emerges through the manner in which workers induct new colleagues, and respond to bureaucratic not managerial authority.

The analysis of responsibility is thus presented in two distinct sections in this chapter. First, I present responsibility as it emerges explicitly through worker conceptualisations of work-life balance. This conceptualisation of work-life balance draws from an ideological argument through which workers attempt to disassociate themselves, or isolate themselves, from formal work-responsibilities in the hope of maximising more social, or non-work responsibilities. I contrast this conceptualisation of responsibility, in the second section of this chapter, to the Derridean conceptualisation of responsibility which is conceived in a more active sense: through the worker's commitment to something other than themselves. I demonstrate this more active form of responsibility in the findings through the manner in which workers train each other during inductions, and the way in which workers organise themselves around bureaucratic policy, rather than managerial authority. Both these forms of responsibility are valuable to an understanding of worker responses to insecure and precarious work because they detail the mechanisms through which workers transform the social and political landscape of work. I contrast this (active) form of responsibility to the more passive form that emerges through the concept of work-life balance. I criticise this notion of work-life balance for rendering a more passive working subject who is at best 'regulating' their subjectivity around managerial protocols, and at worst is normalising the capitalistic appropriation of themselves at work.

The criticism of work-life balance in this chapter recognises the potential of a heightened sense of personal autonomy and self-responsibility to be a strategic aspect of neoliberal discipline in which modern management attempts to turn its employees into obedient labourers (see Berardi, 2009; Lazzarato, 2011; Fleming, 2014 & 2017). Nevertheless, by illuminating this more active, Derridean form of responsibility, this chapter challenges this neoliberal narrative by illustrating more deviant forms of responsibility in these findings. Through these deviant behaviours, I argue that workers

actively affect the organisation of the workplace through mutual forms of self-organisation. This active self-organisation of workers is vital to understanding the effects of insecure work, and also the future transformation of work.

Work-life Balance & the (Problematic) Separation of Responsibility

Perhaps the most prevalent response from workers about their role and their obligations to work was an apathetic detachment to work. While understandable — given the low-skilled and monotonous nature of their work — workers perceived this form of attachment as an active, rather than a passive approach to work. For instance, when I asked Kellin (M, 27, site 3) what his role at work was, he was comically dismissive of any 'meaningful' attachment to his job.

> PJ: can you describe your official role at work?
>
> Kellin: fixing [hardware[7]]; [hardware] repair man. It's just that simple.
>
> PJ: right, so. What do you *actually* do at work?
>
> Kellin: Fix the [hardware]! [Chuckles]
>
> PJ: that's about it?
>
> Kellin: yep, that's seriously it.

Kellin's point here is was to emphasise that he worked in a 'no-frills' industry. While upbeat about the comical absurdity of his role, he was sure to emphasise that his job was boring, repetitive, and monotonous. The tone was similar, but less comedic across other worksites. Jonas (M, 32, site 2) emphasises this monotony of his work when he explains that:

> I'm on casual basis. My responsibilities are to pack boxes. That's it.

Jonas's point here highlights an important distinction of responsibility that emerges through this recognition of monotony and routine. By being employed on a casual basis, Jonas's responsibilities are limited. In the retail and customer focused industries, too, workers argued that their work responsibilities were not complex. Kyle (M, 30, site 5) says:

> PJ: so that's it then? [serve] Customers and [refill] stock?
>
> Kyle: Haha, pretty much. It's not the most complex job, dude. But yeah — those two alone will keep me busy enough

Similarly Gareth (M, 24, site 1) agrees when he says that work is not particularly creative:

[7] Due to concerns about the anonymity of Kellin and his worksite, the object has been removed from this transcript.

> …yeah. It's like working behind a counter at Subway or something. Where you just get the [food] stuff from the fridge out the back. That's the extent of our creative process at work.

These findings were not surprising given the prevalence of casualisation and unskilled, or at least low-skilled, nature of work that these positions entailed. Moreover, it was not surprising that the highly organised nature of these worksites and their use of KPIs, bureaucratic documentation, and quantifiable production rates to organise labour would have limited the diversity of experiences. However, the conscious acceptance of routine and monotonous labour processes is significant because it illustrates a willing embrace a lack of responsibility from these workers. An excellent example of this acknowledgement of a lack, or at least minimal work-responsibility is explained by Xin (M, mid 30s) who is a shop assistant at site 1. When asked whether he would consider taking a promotion he responds uncertainly; largely at the thought of taking on *more* responsibility:

> yes and no. I've thought about it. But I don't know, It's a big jump. [Being a] Manager at [work]. I wonder if I just don't care enough about this work to go for it. Like I've been here long enough to make a good attempt, I think. But I'm just not sure. It's such a boring job here, and I like it because it's boring. But if I had to be responsible here, I don't know. It's easy — that's why I'm here, you know. We're looked after — reasonably. I don't know

Here Xin emphasises that boring work is enjoyable because it is easy, and there is little responsibility. If he was made to be more responsible to work, he is unsure whether it would be worthwhile. In a similar example, Marg (F, early/mid 20s) a shop assistant at site 5 agrees that workers 'don't get paid enough' to take on responsibilities. Here Marg illustrates this active interpretation in which workers perceive their apathetic disassociation from work to be an active form of deviance. The association here is that by doing 'easy' work, these workers were not exploiting themselves to hard labour. Marg says:

> And sure there are times when I think I don't get paid enough to be doing shitty jobs. And sure, I want more money. But at the end of the day I think it's pretty cushy work. You know, it's easy. Haha. And I don't care enough to do anything hard…

Not all responses were this apathetic in their approach to work, however. For example, Corbin (M, 35) who packs orders at site 4 agrees that the value of work is that it is easy. He explains that the pragmatic nature of work is rewarding.

> It's not too bad here. Its good work. It's easy. Its hands on. I'm contributing to sending food around Australia — pretty much. Everyone needs food.

While Corbin agrees with points made by Marg and Xin about the simple and easy nature of their work, he really enjoyed his work. This pragmatic, 'hands-on' aspect of low-skilled manual labour was a point of enjoyment for some workers who liked "seeing a finished product at the end of the day". Nevertheless, this minimisation of work-responsibility was important for workers because it made work 'easier', and many of the workers also found these controllable aspects of work to be satisfying. For instance, Jonas (M, 32) a packer at site 2 agrees that the simplicity of work is an enjoyable part of the day, however, he explains that this simplicity makes the day 'perfectible' and this notion of perception appears to be an important factor as to 'why' Jonas works. He says:

> …Its easy work too. You know I can control my workstation. I can master it. I can be the best most efficient person here. I can have a perfect day! How many jobs can you have a perfect day!? I can do this job, and I can do it well — and when I do — it helps all the guys around me. And that's nice. It's nice to have stability and a bit of control.

This simplicity and reduced responsibility, according to Jonas, affords him a sense of stability and control over his workday. The routine organisation of warehouse work appeals to Jonas because the limits of work are strictly outlined such that the workers know exactly what is expected from them without the need to go 'above and beyond'. There is both pleasure in work for Jonas because he has a job that is both simple and perfectible, but also because work does not require Jonas to work overtime, or take work home with him.

While the payoff to work will be explored in more depth in the following chapter, this perception of work as 'easy' and 'controllable' is valuable because it highlights a manner in which workers welcome, rather than deviate, from responsibility in their workplaces. The regulation of work-responsibilities is materialised through the lack of obligation to complex or creative involvement with work. Instead, these workers savour the lack of obligation as a means to help draw a line between themselves and the work in which they are involved in. Evana (F, 34) who works on the production line at site 3 explains:

> Evana: yeah, I was really amazed by that when we started working here too. It was fun. I mean it's not fun-fun, but it's not as horrible as people tend to think it is. We have fun. Work 6-2. Then go home. It's good. We get time to…I'm not mentally exhausted by the

> time I get home. I'm sometimes physically exhausted though. But you know. I get home and have half an afternoon still left to play with.

Her colleague Ben (M, 34) also agreed with this point, however he also emphasises this perspective of a work-life balance in which he explains the lack of 'emotional blackmail' that accompanies jobs where workers are required to work (for free) from home:

> Ben: That's the perks of being a labourer and having the early start, you know. You get out. Do your physical work. Get your job done. You go home. You know. It feels good, right. No emotional blackmail. No paperwork. Nothing.

This awareness of working from home, or 'after hours' was also discussed by Gareth (M, 24) who is a shop assistant at site 1. Gareth explains how this regulated form of responsibility freedom through this conception of work-life balance:

> Gareth: …It's not like I have to take work home with me. Or even worry about when the stock needs to be ordered or anything. It's like, I look out the back, and if somethings not there – it's not my fault; that's the bosses. When I go into work all I have to do is serve customers and occasionally re-stack the trays. When I was younger I used to work at a fish 'n' chip store, and if we didn't tell the boss when things were getting low, and we ran out we would cost the business a couple of hundred dollars. But here at [site 1] I have none of that responsibility. I just go in, do my work, and go home. That's what I meant by freedom, I guess.

Similar narratives and conceptualisation of "freedom" and "harmony" are common amongst the literature on work-life balance (Gambles, Lewis, & Rapoport, 2006). While work-life balance discourses are all too often presented as empowering for workers, their ability, as many theorists have pointed out, to try to conceptualise clear distinctions between work time/space/identity and non-work, or private time/space/identity is inherently problematic, especially when considering the role that work serves in socialising identity and experience (Lewis, Anderson, Lyonette, Payne, & Wood, 2016; Pedersen & Lewis, 2012). One of the leading problems of precarious work has been the mobilisation of insecurity across social barriers such that workers in almost any industry, of any walk of life around the work can be affected (Kalleberg, 2009; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Berardi, 2009; Standing, 2011; Fleming, 2014; Deranty, 2015). Kalleberg, for instance emphasises the effect of precarious work on the social and political experiences of workers:

> Precarious work has far-reaching consequences that cut across many areas of concern to sociologists. Creating insecurity for many people, it has pervasive consequences not only for

> the nature of work, workplaces, and people's work experiences, but also for many nonwork individual (e.g., stress, education), social (e.g., family, community), and political (e.g., stability, democratisation) outcomes. (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 2).

Similarly, Deranty defends the notion of work as a vital tool in ascertaining the sociological effects of precarity because it serves a fundamental social experience whereby self-knowledge is created through the subjective experience of reality. Even if this reality is one of precarity and insecurity, such an experience, Deranty adds (2008), remains an essential aspect in the cultivation of identity and meaning. "Through work" Deranty says (2008, p. 452), "the subject is put in the most direct and genuine relation with the world, and is related to others at the same time as he/she is related to the world". Consequently, to separate 'work' identity, from 'life' identity is inherently problematic for these accounts of work-life balance.

These problematic attempts to separate work and life were evident throughout the research, however. Workers were adamant that work was simply a 'tool' for (economically) sustaining livelihoods, rather than a factor involved in their overall social identity. For instance, Skyler (F, 30), a shop assistant at site 1, argued that while she thought work could be organised to be more productive, and socially beneficial (to the workers) she was reticent to take on the responsibilities of organising that change. This reticence, she argues, was because she did not want work responsibilities to become *her* responsibilities. She says:

> Yeah, [there is] no way I'd let this place destroy my life. There is nothing about this job that would warrant me taking responsibility for it. Probably the happiest part of my working day is clocking off and walking out that fucking door. You know, it's like fuck you [site 1]; I've got money for another week, I'm set'. Yeah. No way I'd ever take responsibilities at this place. They couldn't pay me enough.

Central to Skyler's conceptualisation of responsibility is a belief that by separating her emotional involvement of work, she is protecting her personal life from her work-life. Subsequently, there is a clear sentiment that by regulating her responsibilities at work, she can regulate (or liberate) her life outside of work time and space. Fred (M, 29), a picker at site 2, agrees that the limitation of work responsibilities is an important aspect of securing a space for social activity outside of work. For him the limitation of responsibility at work is important because it protects the individual from the meaningless system of production that work. As Fred argues, the system (and more specifically, his boss) does not care how he works, so long as he meets the basic expected output. Fred believes that

his personal investment in the company reflects little value into his personal life; he receives no gratification from work, he argues, regardless of his level of productivity (as long as it meets the bare minimum):

> PJ so one last question. Are you the only reverse picker?
>
> Fred: yeah
>
> PJ: does that make it gratifying? You know to get your job done?
>
> Fred: No [laughs, as if the question was absurd!] no cause it's such a shit-kicker position. You know so. No one comes up to you and says 'oh you've done a good job today'. Like I said, I've got a supervisor who doesn't care -- so he doesn't hassle me if I don't do enough, but he doesn't give a shit if I do more than I normally could. So it's that balance. And that's it. Regardless of how much I do or don't do, nothing gets said[8].
>
> PJ: yeah, right. I understand.
>
> Fred: yeah, so it's not like I go home and say 'yes, I killed it at work today'….

For Fred, and Skyler, this disassociation from work was important because it prevented them putting in extra effort where it would not be recognised. In order to guard themselves against working harder than they need to, Fred and Skyler limit their investment in work. This limitation of personal investment is best captured through Ben's (M, 34, site 3) perspective in which he argues that workers can "walk away" after a shift and focus that emotional/mental energy towards something worthwhile; in his case, his family.

> You couldn't pay me in this job to take responsibilities home with me. Not that there are any, anyway. I guess the boss has paperwork and shit. But even then, I don't think he does too much at home. You know. We all work our 8 hours, fix [hardware] then go home…

Later on in the interview:

> PJ: How does this job fit into your bigger picture of life? Your career goals or something?
>
> Ben: yeah "career goal" [mumbles jokingly]. [Mockingly] yeah, I've got a career plan… Um. I never had a goal, mate. I just wanted steady work to pay for the bills, boat, and booze. And family. And house too I guess. But yeah it all fits in nicely. I guess the advantage of finishing early though is that I have the time to get shit down in the evenings too. Whether

[8]. It is worth remembering that Fred is still subject to output quotas. So while his boss doesn't motivate Fred to do *more* work, Fred is still contractually bound by some KPIs. I will discuss this bureaucratic obligation in the latter part of this chapter.

> it's the banking, some shopping, or picking the kids up from school. You know it's nice to have that options when the missus can't do it — to grab the kids and spend some time with them. Even hanging out, you know sometimes I'll kick a ball around with my girls at soccer. And I guess it's good having some mental space for it too. You know the space to think and relax a bit too. Just so I'm not go, go, go all the time. Whereas if I was at a shittier job I'd be too stressed to go home and love my family. But I also like doing shit around the house. There's always jobs to do. Painting, stripping, fixing…you know it's good to have afternoon. Sorry what was the question?
>
> PJ: (laughs) I was just asking about how work fits in. From the sounds of it you're pretty happy with it. It gives you time and space at home.
>
> Ben: yeah, absolutely it's nice to have the freedom you know.

Here Ben argues for a clear separation of work time from non-work time, of which non-work time is characterised through Ben's focus on his family responsibilities. More importantly, Ben argues that the limitation of responsibility at work via hourly responsibilities (on which his casual employment contract depends) allows him to more easily delineate these various responsibilities. This ability to separate work responsibilities into hourly segments served a valuable source of empowerment to workers in the research.

Consequently, and perhaps surprisingly for my findings, the nature of casual work appears to offer workers a sense of security through the manner in which it clearly quantifies production outputs. Such a division of responsibility can be contrasted to jobs in the service sector (like academia, for instance!) where work-space/time and home-space/time are more likely to become intertwined by workers who work from home, on the move, or who have to draw from personal/social networks to generate capital. While the neoliberal convergence of work and life is well catalogued in academic literature (Fleming, 2014; Berardi, 2009; Lazzarato; 2012) it is interesting that these (predominantly casual) workers identify with such an idea of security in these jobs. Such reluctance to conflate work and life, however, reflects Fleming's (2017) criticism of 'Human Capital Theory' which he argues is an essential feature of neoliberal employment:

> Employment is being fundamentally *individualized* so that the costs of labour (that firms once covered) are pushed onto the employee with the help of labour-on-demand business models, self-employment, portfolio careers and zero-hours contracts. (Fleming, 2017, p. 692)

In order to avoid the internalisation of these extra (unrewarded) responsibilities of work, the workers presented in this chapter thus far appear to mentally distance themselves from their work. This ideological, and deliberate disassociation between themselves and work signifies an attempt to avoid becoming responsible to the systematic capitalism of the workplace. Such a process of "radical responsibilization" warns Fleming, emerges when each individual human capitalist becomes entirely responsible for his or her economic fate" (2017, p. 697). Fleming refers to such a process of responsibility as the 'human capital hoax' in which:

> Neoliberal ideology overwhelmingly supports these shifts in how work is organized, proclaiming the benefits for employers, workers and consumers. Echoing the tenets of human capital theory, this is all about empowering people. (Fleming, 2017, p. 698)

"This excessive individualism", Fleming concludes, "recasts workers as complete owners of their economic failure" (2017, p. 705), and such a recognition appears to be at the forefront of these responses by Ben, Fred and Skyler who are reticent to take on more responsibility than necessary, and actively seek to distance themselves from as much 'responsibility' in work as possible.

By privileging social responsibilities (like free time beyond the scope of the workplace) these workers are not actively engaging in the workplace. While workers ideologically distance themselves from non-ideal aspects of work, they continue to passively reproduce political mechanisms at work. Such a concern about the passive reproduction of the labour process by workers who believed themselves to be otherwise 'deviant' have been presented in Chapter Three (see also McCabe, 2007; Contu, 2008; Korczynski, 2011; Paulsen, 2015). Paulsen's comments about the simulation of work, and empty labour are most pertinent to this ideological 'rejection' of responsibility, here. Paulsen identifies how ideologically empty forms of labour — such as in the interviews above where these workers reject responsibility for work — still manage to simulate the capitalist modes of working.

> Employees who work under conditions of low potential output are not resisting any power structures by engaging in slacking. If they think they are…they are certainly guilty of a type of 'decaf resistance' that only exist in their minds (Contu, 2008). Not even soldiering does necessarily qualify as the type of resistance that threatens the business. Some of the soldiering interviewees explicitly said they were not resisting anything in particular but just trying to avoid work. In all types of empty labour, *the simulation of work* is, nevertheless, crucial. (emphasis in original, Paulsen, 2015, p. 363)

Berardi (2009) also describes a similar phenomenon in which he describes precarity and insecurity as a form of psychological suffering that mirrors the economic process of capitalism. Here Berardi explains that 'fear, anxiety, panic, and depression' are a special kind of 'mental suffering' (from uncertain/precarious social life) that signifies the victory of capitalism where psychological flows begin to mirror the economic process (2009, p. 207). These criticisms of neoliberalism are essential to understanding the nature of responsibility as it appears in these workers' conceptualisations of work-life balance because they highlight the passive capitalist economic reproduction that is inherent in these accounts of 'alternate responsibility'. While workers like Ben, Fred, and Skyler may be successful at creating a more peaceful balance between their work and their personal life, they nevertheless do not deviate from their ordinary (capitalist) responsibilities to work; they still fulfil KPIs and production quotas. Instead, this process of 'deviance' can at best be described as regulating responsibilities of work by not performing more work than necessary, or at worst (and far more likely) they normalise and reproduce the authority of these output quotas over their fellow workers.

Rather than exemplifying a form of deviant responsibility, these findings suggest a form of 'false consciousness' in which worker cynicism changes their ideological disposition to work, and not their active engagement with work. Žižek defines false consciousness as a "misrecognition of the social reality which is part of this reality itself" (2008, p. 25). Žižek argues that this notion — which he traces back to Marx (and Engels)[9] (2008, p. 27) — is more important today than ever because of the function of the role of cynicism:

> …cynical reason is no longer naïve, but is a paradox of enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it. (Žižek, 2008, pp. 25-26)

Bloom (2016, p. 589) agrees with Žižek's criticism of cynicism, arguing that "'work' and 'life' are being combined into a cultural fantasy that contributes to modern organizational and capitalist identity regulation". Furthermore, Bloom argues:

> Worker loyalty is paradoxically no longer correlated to explicitly economic or organizational values (e.g. individualism, career advancement within a company, increasing the firm's profit, and so on) but instead around the idyllic promise of achieving 'work–life balance'…Consequently, through this fantasy of balance, self-hood becomes once again

[9] Terry Eagleton (Eagleton, 1991, p. 89) points out that Marx himself has never used the term 'false consciousness' (in print) and instead emphasises Engel's contribution to the term, rather than Marx.

> inexorably bound to themes of capitalist work and organizations. (Bloom, 2016, pp. 589-590)

I use the term 'false consciousness' here to refer to a specific cognitive dissonance between the thoughts and the practices of the worker. It represents an inconsistency between the aim of the workers and the prefiguration of their actions (see Gautney, 2009; Newman, 2016; Gordon, 2018). That is, 'false consciousness' here emphasises a contradiction between the participant's claim to be 'not responsible' to work, *and*, their performance of various responsibilities at work. The contradiction is clear because these workers cannot have it both ways. False consciousness is not used to suggest a metaphysical disjunction between the workers and their 'true' or 'authentic' selves. Instead, I use the term to describe the phenomena of how individuals "suffer" because their "mental representations of the social relations around them systematically conceal or obscure the realities of subordination, exploitation, and domination those relations embody" (Little, 2018). Such is clearly the case in these findings in which the workers claim to reject their responsibility towards work, and yet continue to satisfy (albeit, grudgingly) their KPIs and hourly quotas. Žižek's ideological focus is particularly clear here insofar as he conceptualises false consciousness as a paradox in which a subject commits to doing one thing, and believing the other. While I have little doubt that such claims by workers to reject their responsibilities arise as a defence mechanism fuelled by cynical or ironic intentions, Žižek's sentiments are convincing:

> Cynical distance is just one way…to blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them.* (Žižek, 2008, p. 30)

Such a problematic approach to responsibility in these worksites will help to demonstrate — in the following section — how workers deviate from certain obligations and responsibilities in order to affect particular social and political outcomes at work. This active form of responsibility is more clearly provided through a Derridean framework in which I deconstruct worker responsibilities to demonstrate how workers create new responsibilities to deviate from, and challenge, their precarious and insecure subjectivity to work.

Self-Responsibility and the Struggle for Mutual Benefit

I would like to remind the reader that a fundamental aspect of Derrida's conceptualisation of responsibility pertains to the "injunction to respond", "to respond to the other and answer for oneself before the other" (Derrida, 1995, p. 3). This aspect of responsibility is important for Derrida — and the analysis of deviant responsibility in this thesis — because it conceptualises responsibility

as an active response to a social/political/cultural/historical condition. This conceptualisation of responsibility can be defined against irresponsibility which Derrida quite simply describes as the absence of "knowledge or consciousness of what being responsible means" (1995, p. 25). This active vision of responsibility is important Derrida reminds us (in Chapter Three) because:

> …if decision-making is relegated to a knowledge that it is content to follow or to develop, then it is no more a responsible decision, it is the technical deployment of a cognitive apparatus, the simple mechanistic deployment of a theorem. (Derrida, 1995, p. 24)

My criticism of the 'work-life balance' approach to understanding deviant forms of responsibility in the previous section has been that it resembles this 'technical deployment of a cognitive apparatus' without changing the fundamental premise of the apparatus. Instead, in this section I will demonstrate a more active conceptualisation of responsibility that became clear throughout the interviews. Like the above section, this formation of responsibility forms around a kind of *self*-responsibility in the sense that responsibility was internalised and reproduced on an individual, ideological level. However, unlike the previous section, this form of self-responsibility can be seen to actively transform and reorganise worker subjectivity through material investments in both training workers, as well as organising workers around bureaucratic rules on site. Thus, this form of self-responsibility is important because it is both a responsibility to one's self, but it emerges from a shared conceptualisation of responsibility and obligation to a work environment. This mutual conceptualisation of obligation and self-responsibility will be explained in two sections; first, I explore the role of on-the-spot training in these workplaces, and second I explore the recognition of bureaucratic authority as opposed to managerial authority.

On-the-Spot Training

While all workplaces offered their workers a basic induction on the first day on-site, it became clear that much of the day-to-day training was learnt on a more personal basis. This interpersonalised training experience was described by workers throughout the interviews as an integral process to 'learning' and 'understanding' their roles at work. While personal differences between worker responsibilities varied (understandably) between workers, similarities between the reproduction of various practices, and the avoidance of others were noticeable between worker accounts of daily work duties. Tary (F, early-30s), a picker at site 2, explains that her colleagues were instrumental in 'showing her the ropes'. Not only to teach her what to do at work, but also to teach her what she doesn't need to worry about doing at work:

> PJ: so you have to learn time management yourself?

Tary: yeah, it's something you just have to learn as you go.

PJ: wow. I guess I found that interesting because these are really valuable skills to have at work, right? Like I mean — time management is essential to you picking things on time and stuff? Isn't it? Like these are the skills that save you time and efficiency? And you have to learn them from other workers, rather than being taught them by management?

Tary: yeah. These are the tricks of the trade. If you can manage your time…the way you organise yourself within those hours at work is…can pay off really nicely.

PJ: yeah, yeah. Absolutely. So, who are you learning from? I mean who do you learn the tricks from? Mates, or just people next to you on the line?

Tary: I was lucky, I think…because I'm a girl they put me on with another lady who was pretty similar age to me. And she was awesome. So, we had a lot of stuff to talk about. And she showed me around and she showed me how to do things efficiently. What kind of things…when to spend time on things, and when to…what kind of things you can cut corners on. When to step back. And how to work your way through books and maximise your time at work I guess.

Here Tary demonstrates a variety of responsibilities at work. While there are the more obvious contractual obligations, she also details a responsibility to a pre-existing work culture that defines 'when to spend time on things, and…what kind of things you can cut corners on'. Tary also recognises this cultural responsibility to the workplace later on in the interview when she discusses her responsibilities to *other* workers:

> …these are things that if you do, or don't do, you are gonna really piss some people off, and the last thing you want in any workplace is a toxic environment…

Through this element of her training, or her induction to the workplace, Tary recognises an aspect of knowledge that is separate to, and divergent from more official bureaucratic knowledge. While less investment into worker training has been recognised as a tactic of neoliberal management designed to get workers more invested in processes of work (without paying them for it) (Standing, 2011, p. 85), the form of knowledge Tary identifies appears to be divergent from this official bureaucratic vision of appropriate work — especially since it includes 'cutting corners'. While Tary is certainly instructed about the standard protocols and obligations of her work station, she is *also* taught *how* to behave in the culture of her workplace; she is taught how to cut corners, and perhaps more importantly which corners she *should* cut at work, as well as which processes to 'step back'

from and let go. Such an induction into work suggests that workers play an active role in the cultivation of their own organisation in the workplace.

This active role illuminates the separate, and *deviant*, responsibilities that Tary is made aware of through her interactions with colleagues and her experience of working. Moreover, these deviant responsibilities are taught to Tary such that Tary does not perceive herself to be the agent of this behaviour, but instead it exists outside of her will. As such, Tary is — in a very literal sense — trained to be responsible to colleagues at work. Similarly, Julia (F, 23) a shop assistant at site 1, agrees that workers are not prepared for (integral) experiences in her workplace by the standard formal induction process. Julia believes that colleagues are essential to the cultivation of on-site knowledge because they teach each other how to work. When I asked Julia if she 'gets help from her work colleagues' she replied:

> Julia: yeah, all the time. More so than the managers to be honest. The managers only offer advice when you screw up — or if they are bored or something. I learnt most of this job from talking to people here.
>
> PJ: not from training?
>
> Julia: yeah, I mean we got training. But nothing works like it does on the training course. You get real problems once you are working. And you get real arsehole customers and stuff. Stuff you don't learn in the training.

Subsequently, Julia argues that much of her experience at work is cultivated by her interactions with customers and — just as importantly, colleagues. She says:

> PJ: right, so your colleagues help you through?
>
> Julia: sure. We always talk about stuff like that at work. And even other stuff…
>
> PJ: like?
>
> Julia: well like how to do stuff faster, or better, or whatever.
>
> PJ: right, surely the manager would try to teach you these?
>
> Julia: yeah, if they had time. But sometimes there's tricks to the trade, you know [winks].
>
> PJ: what — like industrial secrets?
>
> Julia: ugh, no. Just things that work — but we probably shouldn't be doing.
>
> PJ: oh right, like hiding stock?

Julia: (laughs). Sometimes! …you've been talking to [Co-Worker]?

PJ: maybe….

Julia: [Laughs] But yeah. You know, you cut corners. Sometimes it's easier throwing things into the rubbish than putting them in the "proper" place [quote marks used with fingers]. But you know everybody has their own method, and techniques for cutting corners.

Julia, like Tary, believes colleagues were integral in the organisation of individual workers at work. While both workers were subject to a standard induction process, they explain that they rely far more heavily on the 'hands-on' training with those workers experienced in the workplace. Similar findings have been presented by Inanc, Zhou, Gallie, Felstead, and Green (2015, p. 467) who argue that despite a need for diverse forms of direct participation that "direct participation significantly enhances learning at work in terms of both training and informal learning". Frederick W. Taylor — the founder of organisational management — famously criticised this process of learning because it allowed workers too much variation in routine operations (1919, p. 16). Nevertheless, while Taylor actively sought to codify and centralise the transferal of knowledge between management and workers, this interpersonal transferal of knowledge has been vital to the neoliberalisation of work organisations who use peer training as another form of surplus extraction from labourers (Graeber, 2015; Lazzarato, 2011). Nevertheless, this process of peer-training also proves to be useful for workers because it allows them to be made aware of more than just their administrative duties. Karl (M, 42) an assembly line worker at site 3, explains that learnt knowledge exchanged between workers is vital to understanding the difference between things workers 'can do' and those that they '*should do':*

Well you know, I guess I know where things, where the barrier is. You know, I know what I can do and what I can't…no, sorry, *shouldn't* do. You know, what I can do without really throwing myself out too much. Or sometimes what to leave so that the boss or the 2IC [second in charge] know that they've put too much out for me to do. You know things, like that. Things like clocking in five minutes late so that you get that extra surplus five minutes at the end of the day to finish that last job that never gets finished. That helps. I know how long to push a break before it gets recognised as a *break*…you know, the difference between taking a brief walk to take a piss or something, to having a "smoke break" (winks) [Karl doesn't smoke]. And sometimes that extra two minutes really helps. But then again, to be honest, we get breaks every couple of hours, and breaks aren't really the same if you're fucking around by yourself. You want to hang with the fellas and have a yarn, I think, to really chill out. But it's there, there's always possibilities.

Here Karl associates this personal responsibility as an ethical one that distinguishes between things that cannot or *should not* be done. Such a recourse suggests that the responsibility of individual workers to a great socio-political domain of work is very real because it illuminates a discourse that is not just divergent from the official managerial protocols, but it also suggests that the workers are all aware of these divergent responsibilities. It highlights how workers learn responsibilities from each other as they share experiences, lessons, and strategies to make work better from the perspective of the workers. This divergent responsibility (i.e. to make work better for the workers) exemplifies my argument in this section by illustrating a practical measure in which workers take responsibility for themselves at work through the induction and training of their colleagues. What makes this process interesting is that it happens in an almost preconscious level; that is workers described it happening, but often didn't recognise the importance of it until I prompted them to reflect on the process of 'how they know what they can and can't do'.

These findings reflect an anarchic element of practice through the organisation of workers insofar that the workers can be seen to take direct, and creative, control of the passage of knowledge in the workplace. As Todd May points out, this focus on knowledge resonates with the poststructuralist accounts of power because knowledge is a form of power (May, 1994, p. 68). "What we must come to grips with" he adds, "if we are to understand our world, are the forces that constitute us and our knowledge (May, 1994, p. 69)". Here May presents the foundations for his version of Postanarchism in the poststructuralist association of subjectivity and knowledge (May, 1994, p. 76).

"Practices of knowledge", May says, "are also the objects and subjects of struggle and resistance (1994, pp. 91-92)" and thus, the manner in which the workers in my findings are able to transform the organisation of knowledge in the workplace suggests that they also take a form of control over the organisation of subjectivity in the workplace. While this organisational struggle is by no means collectively organised by the workers in these findings, they all share a mutual interest in coordinating their deviant practices (i.e. cutting corners, avowing certain protocols and paperwork). This mutual self-organisation of workers will be explored in more detail in the following chapter, however, it is worth acknowledging here that while workers maintained independence over their hourly quotas and KPIs, their responsibilities appear to converge over approaches to work that benefitted all workers like never exceeding quotas, cutting agreed upon corners, or allowing for a certain amount of 'slack' from various shift workers. Such a finding is contrary to those that perceive worker deviance as a form of cynical self-interest, or self-survival. Instead, it suggests that

workers can create their own responsibilities at work, and that these responsibilities deviate from neoliberal capitalistic parameters.

Bureaucratic Authority

Another noticeable point in which workers demonstrated a deviant form of responsibility in the findings was the manner in which they responded to bureaucratic authority over managerial authority. That is to say that workers privileged bureaucratic obligations more highly than directions from specific managers. In Chapter Three, Smith's (2001) analysis on the ontology of organisations was used to present the structural importance of texts, and documentation in objectifying organisational status. Central to Smith's argument was that bureaucratic documentation is fundamental to understanding the institutionalisation of organisations because these texts "mediate, regulate, and authorize people's activities" (2001, p. 160). In a similar fashion, the responses from workers in my research reflect an intuitive response to these organisational artefacts through the manner in which workers use documented rules to challenge, undermine, and marginalise the role of specific managers at work. For instance, when asked about the role of management in his day to day activities in the workplace Harry (M, 31) — a shop assistant at site 1 — replied:

> Harry: well like the manager's jobs, funnily enough, aren't really about managing people, I don't think. It's funny, it sounds like it should be. But they're not. Their jobs are just to keep to store running, and to pass any problems/advice up to management committees or whatever. Like the managers don't really care as long as people aren't fucking around or fucking over the store. You know, as long as there isn't criminal negligence, there isn't a problem.

Thus, for Harry, the managers' role in the workplace is about keeping the 'wheels of the machine turning'. The manager's role is increasingly not about direction, but rather the maintenance of bureaucratic order that is already set in place, and in motion. Work itself is organised around "texts (or documents)" which are "essential to the objectification of organisations and institutions" (Smith, 2001, p. 160). This objectification of bureaucratic organisations is reflected across management literature that criticises "leadership" as becoming too focused on enforcing administrative regulations rather than inspiring and unifying workers (Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007). Moreover, a similar focus on the divergence from managerial authority to bureaucratic authority is also reflected in Graeber's (2015) thesis about the acceleration of bureaucratic control over society as it does in Du Gay's (2005) thesis. A similar logic was reflected in the findings where workers were quick to question the necessity of managers who were perceived to hinder the work-process, rather than help it. Basil (M, 19), a shop assistant at site 5, for example, insists that he would rather seek help from

colleagues before turning to management because management would be less helpful. When asked if he would ever report an issue to his boss Basil replied:

> Basil: it depends. I mean it's not really an issue though. Like if someone's worked [in his department] then I'd just talk to them. There's no reason to go to the boss. It's not their problem.
>
> PJ: right, so *only* if something can't be resolved you go to the boss?
>
> Basil: yeah that's right. And that's normally a fuck-around thing, anyway, so you don't take questions to the boss unless you're ready for a massive answer/search.
>
> PJ: right, so it's not necessarily because your boss wouldn't be able to help, but that they wouldn't be as efficient?
>
> Basil: yeah, I mean the boss would probably tell you what needs to be done. But if you have someone there with experience doing it they'd tell you *how* [emphasis on word] to do it. You know how the easiest way to do it is.

Like Basil, Eddie (M, 40) a picker at site 2, shares this recognition of management as an additional, but unnecessary function of the workers' daily interactions at work. While Eddie struggles to vocalise his argument, his ambivalence as to the purpose of management is clear:

> Eddie: well it's not like the boss is *the boss*. It's not like he's in charge. Wait, no. He *is* in charge. But you know it's not like an…
>
> PJ: authority thing?
>
> Eddie: yes. That's it. It's not an authority thing. The difference is not an authoritative one, it's not like we don't hang out because it's not the right thing to do. We don't hang out because…the difference is that he does a different job to me.

Similarly, Eddie's colleague Fable (M, 29) also a picker at site 2, agrees that their management serves little importance in 'day-to-day' organisation. According to Fable, his interactions with his manager are nothing more than idle chatter and small talk; when it comes to 'production' Fable argues that he is 'left to his own [bureaucratic] devices':

> PJ: so does he [the manager] hang around and keep an eye on you?
>
> Fable: oh no. Not at all, I'm left to my own devices constantly. Absolutely. But I mean there's interaction there, sure. I mean in the morning; I come in the morning and have a chat about nothing. And if I see him during the day as well I'll hit him up and talk shit.

While Fable was in good humour about the relationship he had with his boss, he was adamant that work would continue unabated in the absence of his manager. This recognition of bureaucratic authority signifies a deviation from the typical managerial form of authority that is often believed to exist in unskilled and low-skilled work. Although this deviation of authority does not necessitate a deviation from certain work responsibilities (like KPIs) it certainly has the potential to do so as made clear by Dallas (M, 38). Dallas, a picker at site 4, explains several encounters with management in which he challenges his manager's authority. On the first occasion Dallas refused to follow his manager's orders to package damaged stock for some customers:

> Dallas: …Yeah, like the other day I was out pitching together a bunch of these bags of these bags of potatoes for an order and [boss] comes down and is like "mate, use these damaged stock, it'll be fine" and I was like "are you fucking kidding man, no way. You're crazy, I'm not doing it. If you want to [do it, then] here, here's the order, *you* fill it out".
>
> PJ: right, so you didn't do it?
>
> Dallas: nah man. If we did that there would be hell to pay, I don't want my name on the paper work.

When asked why there would be 'hell to pay', Dallas replied:

> …well the paperwork says it all right? If the paperwork has my name on it and the store complains it's my arse. Even if [boss] does the right thing and takes the hit for me *the store* [emphasis added] still thinks I'm a fuckhead — and it's documented, you know?

Here Dallas clearly feels obliged by a different authority at work than his specific manager. Dallas' responds to an obligation — or responsibility — to something other than his manager (whether it is the bureaucratic obligation to turn in good paperwork, do the right thing by customers/work colleagues will never be known). His reluctance to have his name formally recognised on the 'paperwork' suggests that he feels more responsible to an element of the workplace that he is to his specific manager. A similar conclusion can be reached through the analysis of another incident where Dallas describes the manager as 'one of the boys' by holding the manager to the same rules as the workers. He explains:

> Dallas: …We have a deal right, first one in the office has to make the pot of coffee for everyone. (Laughs). So because we were all waiting out the front for the boss to arrive, no one wanted to be the first on site. So we made the boss go in first, then told him he had to make us all coffee. Haha. That'll teach the prick right for sleeping in!

PJ: ha. Right. He didn't mind, though?

Dallas: nah mate. Those are the rules!

Here Dallas demonstrates the notion that workers and management are all bound by the same logic. That is, rules which are applied to the workers, are applied to all: including management. The notion of managers as 'just another employee' has been recognised as an important managerial tactic for naturalising organisational, and bureaucratic authority (see Fleming & Sewell, 2002, p. 859). Such a move, they suggest helps authorise the status of bureaucratic policy into an ontological level in which it functions as its own entity devoid of worker — or managerial — intervention. Nevertheless, by confronting and calling out management, Dallas demonstrated a form of responsibility that deviated from more than just managerial authority, but which also challenged the routine expected behaviour of the workplace. That is to say that Dallas was successful in publically (i.e. in front of other workers) disrupting the 'chain of command' *and* he got away with it. Such a process demonstrates a Derridean conception of responsibility because Dallas creates a space of uncertainty in which workers have to choose how to behave. By presenting workers with this uncertainty, Dallas creates what Derrida refers to as an "injunction to respond", "to respond to the other and answer for oneself before the other" (1995, p. 3). By openly challenging his manager, Dallas succeeds at politicising the relationship between workers and management because he forces them to re-think their relationship to authority. Such a process reflects the anti-authoritarian principle of undecidability, which according to Newman:

> …affirms neither identity nor non-identity, but remains in a state of undecidability between the two. The infrastructure is a way of theorizing difference that makes the formation of stable, unified identities in philosophy impossible. It is also a model that allows thinking to transcend the binary structures that have limited it. So the aim of this strategy is not to destroy identity or presence. It is not to affirm difference over identity, absence over presence. This would be, as I have suggested, to reverse the established order, only to establish a new order. Difference would become a new identity, and absence a new presence. (Newman, 2001, p. 10)

By challenging the authority of management, Dallas demonstrates an anarchistic form of responsibility. This anarchic theme emerges through the way Dallas creates a point of departure from pre-determined work protocols and lays responsibility in the hands of workers who must decide how to react and behave in this undetermined situation. Through this scenario, workers are forced to think about their responsibilities and engage in a political process by refiguring their relationship to authority. By questioning the relationship to authority workers embody a form of

anti-authoritarianism as they play with the meanings and power of various forms of authority. This process of questioning, regardless of the outcome, is an essential feature of Anarchists who:

> …explain their actions and modes of organization as intended not only to help bring about generalized social transformation, but also to liberate *themselves* to the greatest degree possible. (Gordon, 2007, p. 42)

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been to illustrate the evolution of responsibility across these workplaces. This focus on responsibility is essential to this thesis because it helps to situate the subjectivity of workers as they respond to and organise themselves around actions at work. An essential focus of this chapter has been to locate deviant responsibilities in the findings in order to understand how workers challenge and struggle against these precarious aspects of work.

Two conceptualisations of responsibility were presented in this chapter. The first, and more explicit form of responsibility that emerged from the findings was presented through the concept of the 'work-life balance' in the first section of this chapter. I presented this concept by examining the process in which workers deliberately disassociated themselves from certain responsibilities at work. As I have pointed out in this chapter, this process of disassociation relies on an ideological separation of responsibility in which participants 'rejected' or distanced themselves from the ideological nature and process of their work. Typical examples of this rejection of responsibility were vocalised through general claims from workers about 'not working any harder than necessary' at work. Nevertheless, I have argued that this ideological 'rejection' of responsibility to work does not 'reject' the material responsibilities that workers continue to reproduce through the labour process. That is to say that while workers appear to be emotionally guarding themselves against further objectification from work, they nevertheless continue to reproduce the labour process without much variation. While they identified as deviant workers, they continued to meet KPIs, and observe managerial protocols, and as such I have been critical of the deviant potential of this perspective because such practices were devious without being deviant; that is that although these practices diverged from managerial protocols, they upheld or reified the same political relationship between bureaucratic authority and the workers.

In the second section of this chapter I presented a more deviant form of responsibility that I identified in the research. I argued that deviant responsibilities emerge through the manner in which workers trained or disciplined each other in the workplace. This process of training was important because it illuminates two similar, but divergent responsibilities when training staff; the first was to teach them the proper, or official work-obligations (i.e. KPIs, managerial protocols), and the second

involved inducting staff into an organisational culture. This second form of responsibility illustrates a deviant form of responsibility in which workers demonstrate separate and different obligations to those of their managers or administration. Instead, workers demonstrate responsibilities that deviate from official protocols to reproduce strategies about how to 'cut corners' and avoid certain aspects of work and administration.

Furthermore, I also identify a deviant form of responsibility that emerges through the response of workers to bureaucratic authority instead of managerial authority. While the rise of bureaucratic authority can be distinctly attributed to neoliberal management processes (Graeber, 2015; McCabe, 2007; Lazzarato, 2011; Du gay, 2005) I argue its emergence in these findings demonstrates a mechanism workers use to deviate from, and challenge managerial authority at work. Such a challenge is demonstrated through Dallas's interactions with management in which he repeatedly uses bureaucratic rules to contradict, or 'catch out' his manager. By utilising bureaucratic authority here, Dallas embodies the Derridean deconstructive methodology by using a structural form of power at work (bureaucracy) to undermine another (managerial authority). Through this deconstructive process, Dallas is able to produce a form of subjectivity that explores the limits of these two forms of authority. By creating this division, Dallas manages to create an unknown — or unplanned — situation in which he and his fellow workers have to choose between one form of authority and another. By creating this choice, Dallas separates the decision-making process from the "mechanistic deployment of a theorem" (Derrida, 1995, p. 24) as he creates a form of responsibility that questions the routine obligations of the workplace. Thus, while Dallas does not explicitly prescribe a form of responsibility, he is successful at creating a space in which workers' responsibilities are freed from obligatory necessity, and are forced to make their own choice about how to (mis)behave. It is precisely this separation of responsibility from necessity that illustrates a deviation in responsibility.

This deviation of responsibility will be explored in the following chapter as I present the theme of 'smart work'. The strategy in which workers described 'being smart at work' demonstrates the way workers discuss and share strategies for how to behave in-between these moments of choice that Dallas presented his fellow workers in this chapter. By exploring the conceptions of 'smart work' I will demonstrate how workers draw from mutual understandings to organise themselves around political opportunities in these precarious workplaces.

Chapter 7: Smart Work

Of all the themes across the interviews, ‘smart work’ was the most prevalent. Being “smart about work”, or as was often stated “not being dumb at work”, proved to be a valuable and frequently referenced idea by employees across all worksites. The term ‘smart work’ appeared in similar contexts and circumstances across all interviews which suggests it served a particular purpose for these workers. Smart work referred to a retrospective analysis of behaviour that involved both the strategic use of time by workers to create more sociable and enjoyable experiences at work, as well as an ability to inconspicuously deviate from onerous, and often mundane work practices. Smart work is the focus of this chapter, as well as the thesis, because it indicates a commonly shared worker response to specific conditions of work. It is valuable to this investigation of insecure, precarious work because it highlights a common means by which workers respond to, and deviate from authority at work.

The contextualisation of smart work in this chapter builds on the findings from chapters five and six in which worker responsibilities were shown as a response to the lack of security and social elements of work. I present smart work arising as a transformational strategy where workers hope to secure dignity and a more rewarding social relationship in workplaces where management practices restrict the social dimensions of work. As a transformational strategy, I present smart work as an anarchistic response of workers to insecure and precarious work. That is, I present smart work as a practice that encourages workers to challenge the central organisation of power at work, and invest in more decentralised and local forms of organisation that give workers more control over their labour process. A central part of this analysis explores alternative explanations to the individualised nature of resistance in work compared to the typical neoliberal one. While smart work certainly emphasises the notion of individual autonomy, I argue it also shares a communal element that suggests it offers much more political resistance than neoliberal forms.

This chapter evolves over three sections. The first section defines the concept of smart work. Here I will present themes from the interviews that illustrate smart work as a specific concept that workers use. I argue that smart work reflects a conceptualisation of knowledge that seeks to disrupt power in the workplace in a shared political response to work. Second, I examine themes from the research that juxtapose smart work as a response to workplace insecurity. Here I argue that smart work responds to the threat of insecurity by obliging workers to systematically challenge protocols that limit worker interactions and behaviours in the workplace. Consequently, I present smart work as a strategic *political* response to the central organisation of work. Third, I examine the concept of smart work as a mechanism that challenges the neoliberal (de)regulation of work. I do this by looking at the payoff to work for workers as they detail the limits of their work. While workers take

an individualistic approach to their tasks at work, they nevertheless come together to share ideas, experiences, and strategies as to how to most effectively struggle against work. Thus I present smart work as a theme that shares the anarchistic ideal of power as one that is decentralised, anti-authoritarian, and non-hierarchical.

What is Smart Work?

Working smart is by no means a new concept to anyone who has worked a day in their life. However, it became clear throughout the interviews that the term 'smart work' came to refer to a very specific concept. Smart work proved to be a retrospective term that was applied to deviant but 'safe' behaviour in the workplace. It was deviant because it demonstrates how workers deviate from official workplace protocol as dictated by either managerial and/or bureaucratic procedure. Moreover, it is 'smart' because it refers to an epistemological framework in which workers come to understand and interpret various responsibilities and obligations. By being smart workers were able to create a more sociable, enjoyable, but also secure relationship to work because they both performed their legal obligation to work (in the eyes of management), as well as disrupting the monotony of the workplace. This section seeks to unpack and explain the nature of this relationship to work.

Smart work, according to Kellin (M, 27), a worker on the assembly line in site 3, is when you don't do anything 'dumb' in front of management. He says:

> Every now and then we have a safety manager coming through [the shop floor], so we obviously put our 'good' hats on that day. And we make sure we proper don't do anything dumb, even if we think no one is watching. That kind of thing.

Across town, Jonas (M, 32), a picker at site 2, agrees that you have to be 'smart' about the way you go about your daily work. While Jonas makes it clear that you don't misbehave in front of management, he suggests that these workers *do* misbehave when the boss isn't around. He says:

> I'm not an idiot about it. You know, I don't chat in front of the boss. We wait till the boss 'aint around before we'll have a yarn. You know, when he is there we'll pull our heads in. You know, you've got to be smart about it.

Smart work here shares a basic recognition of the deviant nature of these relationships. It suggests that both these workers recognise they are doing things that contradict management ideals, and that because of this the workers behave differently when management are, and are not, in a close vicinity. There are many examples from the interviews where workers share similar explanations of things they 'do not do when management is around'. A notable example was from a colleague of

Jonas, Luis (M, 27) who, after the interview had ended, told me a story about two former colleagues who were caught smoking (I assume tobacco…) out the back of the warehouse where there were "obviously" cameras. Luis said these colleagues were 'dumb' and wasn't sympathetic when they got fired. When I asked Luis what they should have done (i.e. what is the smarter alternative) he replied that a 'bunch of them' climb onto the roof of work to smoke before and after shifts. These spaces, he told me, were free from surveillance measures and therefore the smart way to smoke while at work.

While 'behaving' when in close proximity to management is by no means a novel phenomenon, it is valuable for understanding the structures that authorise worker behaviour when management is not around. This conceptualisation of smart work accords with much of the literature that suggests that workers are more likely to 'act out', or 'misbehave' in strict, monotonous, or precarious scenarios (see Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Collinson, 2003; McCabe, 2007; Korczynski, 2011). However, the systematic implementation of 'smart work' suggests that being smart is more than a personal choice when responding and securing otherwise insecure working relationships. That is, that by responding in this smart fashion, workers recognise and respond in mutual recognition to a similar set of risks imposed across the workplace.

This conceptualisation of a mutual recognition arises as an instrumental recognition to processes of work. This recognition is conditioned by the shared experience of workers to a set of processes in their workplace. I conceptualise recognition here in accordance with Honneth's (2012) definition as an "act of moral self-restriction" that individuals "perform on ourselves in the face of others" (p. viii). Nevertheless, unlike Honneth's political goal of achieving a mutual intersubjectivity and "consciousness of self" (2012, p. viii), the goal of workers in my research appears to be a more individual effort to gain freedom of time and interaction. Such a view is qualified by Jonas (M, 32, site 2) who, later on in his interview, suggests that all workers share a similar approach to work.

> …I mean, sure. You don't want to work too hard, because then they'll expect more from you, right? And again, that's just normal. That's straight forward. If you take on responsibilities at work, they'll expect you to take on responsibilities in the future. So fuck doing that.

This experience of smart work was also reflected in the customer focused retail stores, too. A shop assistant at site 1, Skyler (F, 30), agrees that recognising this inherently (capitalistic) structure of work that seeks to push workers to work harder without raising wages is a fundamental aspect of being 'smart at work'. In her interview, however, Skyler implies that a fundamental principle that motivates workers to behave 'smart' is fuelled by the capitalistic appropriation of labour. Skyler

argues that the system is geared to exploit workers to consistently work harder and harder, and that the workers would be *dumb* to not respond to this. Skyler captures the necessity of being smart through the theme of 'surviving at work', because if you aren't smart, she fears the system will take advantage of the worker. Smart work, she argues, is not an incidental feature to respond to work, nor is it just valuable; it is *essential* to surviving in the workplace:

> …we are just trying to survive. We are doing a menial job, there's got to be something else going on to get us through the day. You know? You can't do a menial job five to six nights a week for menial pay and have them expect you to come in every day with a nice fake smile and shit…and that too, comes back to being smarter about the way you work. If they see I'm doing 10 per cent better every week then they are going to up my output 10 per cent every week, and I'm just digging a hole for myself. And when it comes back to, it's not worth my fucking time. I'm still getting paid the same amount and they are fucking me over more.

Here, Skyler suggests an economic perspective on 'smart work' that incorporates time-effort management as the intent of the worker. In a similar argument to Braverman's (1974) labour process theory, Skyler argues that management objectifies workers and reduces the skillsets of workers to the material realm of production. However, in contrast to this labour process theory, Skyler turns towards specific friendship groups rather than a single unified class consciousness as the answer to her problem. This suggests that while smart work was organised around certain principles of behaviour, it was subject to an individual conceptualisation of organisation, rather than any centrally organised response to the problem. That is, unlike the Marxist attachment to a shared working class consciousness as argued by Braverman (1974), smart work challenged these organisational issues on a more individualised, and localised setting — rather than across the entire workplace. Such a response is either explicitly or implicitly, a response to the incremental legal suppression of organised labour in Australia since former Australian Prime Minister Howard's 1995 'Work Choices' legislation (Bramble, 2008, p. 226). In contrast to this, workers favour a more covert and flexible method of resistance. For instance, Skyler talks about smart work as a need to be adaptable:

> …you've got to time it nicely with your mates. You try to organise it so you'll grab a pallet at the same time they do, and then you work at the same rate unpacking the pallet so you'll have to go back for another one at the same time. You become the mastermind of procrastination.

Damon (M, 38), a shop assistant at site 5 — the other large retailer in my fieldwork — described work as similar to a game that had rules. While all the workers were subject to the same game, each

played it on their own terms; if they have fun and got away with it, they are smart, and if not, they are silly. When asked if he had ever been "caught" misbehaving, Damon explained that he had, but it was because *he* was at fault. That is to say, that the issue arose because Damon acted irresponsibility using the wrong tactics, rather than having a specific moral culpability.

> Damon: …I got busted playing a demo on the new PS4 set up the other day.
>
> PJ: ha. Did you get in trouble?
>
> Damon: yeah, I got the 'disappointed speech'. (Laughs).
>
> PJ: bam. That hurts.
>
> Damon: yeah,
>
> PJ: were you expecting it?
>
> Damon: yeah I wasn't very smart about it. I was cleaning up some mess on the floor and it happened to be right there, so I had a go. Boss caught me real quick.

Shortly after he reflected:

> …I think the smart thing would have been to have done it when the boss just wasn't watching. Hahaha. But yeah, there it is.

Here Damon highlights the normalisation of smart work as well as the individual nature of the contemporary workplace. On the one hand, smart work has been normalised to the extent that it should have been obvious to Damon that he was being 'dumb'. On the other, this responsibility was Damon's alone and he takes full accountability for being caught. For Damon, like Kellin and Jonas, smart work involves an element of deviousness that is required to 'not get caught' at work. But just as importantly, as Skyler points out, smart work is important because it makes social aspects of work more engaging, and more bearable. While Damon did not lament his choice to play games at work, he was embarrassed about the manner in which he got caught by management; the embarrassment for Damon was not related to his work-ethic, but rather the irresponsible manner of behaviour that lead to him being *caught.*

The strategy of deviousness was integral to Scott's (1990) analysis of subordinate groups in which he argues that routines of conformity are vital to encouraging the safety and security of these people. He explains the role of security by pointing out a gross irony:

> A cruel paradox of slavery, for example, is that it is in the interest of slave mothers, whose overriding wish is to keep their children safe and by their side, to train them in the routines of conformity. (Scott, 1990, p. 24)

In a similar vein, 'smart work' is a valuable tactic for workers because it leads them to band together in a private sphere, while protecting themselves from the uncertainties that arise from openly defying their workplace. "Short of actual rebellion" Scott argues elsewhere, "powerless groups have…a self-interest in conspiring to reinforce hegemonic appearances" (1990, p. xii). This conspiratorial behaviour is essential to the practice of smart work because it engages workers in a pragmatic sphere whereby culture and identity are secured through the practices and articulation of careful and deviant behaviour.

Smart work thus emerges as a social responsibility here because it obliges individual workers to engage in this practical sphere. Miles (M, 31), who works on the assembly line at site 3 argues that an essential aspect of re-engaging the social sphere of work is not just for personal enjoyment of workers, but also help secure workers in an otherwise monotonous, and alienating work environment. When detailing how monotonous and repetitive his work routine is, I asked Miles how he responds to this "cruise control" in which he and his colleagues find themselves, he replied:

> …well, you try to make the job more fun, or interesting, right? …You know, we joke around. Tell jokes. Muck up a bit. Just to have fun, you know. We end up doing silly things; I don't know: throwing bits of wood [from the pallets] at each other, taping shit together — like people's feet and shit. You know, so they fall over [laughs]. Even just throwing balls of tape around, something to help get people engaged a bit. People switch off, and you need to keep them 'on'. Otherwise that cruise control slips on and you go into mechanical mode. And that's not good. Like if this was the kind of job that robots could do then we wouldn't be here. We are hired because they need us to make these judgment calls. So yeah. It's funny. We need to make sure we stay as humans at work, otherwise we drop out [pauses to think] we cruise…

Here Miles argues that smart work involves more than just an element of deviousness; it involves a creative element that reinforces workers as human, rather than mechanical (robotic) beings. Smart work here can be seen in a more positive light in that it rewards workers for their creativity, rather than just their ability to operate without attracting the attention of management.

The contribution of smart work to the overarching study of resistance, power and responsibility emerges in this unification of personal responsibility with the social development of subjectivity in these monotonous and repetitive workplaces. That is to say, these 'smart workers' do not act alone.

Instead, they draw on the knowledge, experience, and support of their co-workers as they create a mutual understanding of work. These limits of understanding ultimately create notions of smart, and dumb, behaviours that direct worker behaviour to possible scenarios of activity. Xin (M, mid-30s), a shop assistant at site 1, explains the nature of this mutual experience. For him, smart work is understanding the pressures of work, and responding when you can.

> Xin: well what makes you smart at work is by being attentive to what's going on at work, you know like you want to look out for your mates, but not screw around with management. Most of us are casual workers, so you have to make sure that you're not doing anything that could get you fired. But at the same time, we all just want to have fun. Life isn't meant to be boring. So you've got to be smart about when to work, and when to not work, I guess. …or when to muck around.
>
> PJ: right. So what's "smart" is the way you balance your interactions towards management or having some fun?
>
> Xin: yeah, pretty much. I mean you don't want to get on the wrong side of management; that would be stupid. But you don't want to fuck around the other workers, because they are just like me; we are just here to get the pay check and try to not go crazy at work.

Xin premises this summary of smart work earlier in the interview when he explains how the night shift workers often take up the slack from the day shift workers who have to juggle stacking responsibilities with customers at the same time. Xin explains that each worker has to be very careful not to push the relationship. He says:

> The night fill comes in. And they'll rotate the stock. So that's their job too. They'll pick up that slack that you've left off — as long as it's not too much, you know. That's the trick. This is why you have to be careful about how you stuff, stuff in at the back. If it's real bad the night shift worker will hang you out to dry. They don't want to deal with that shit, and they'll call you out...at the bottom level it's about respect. I don't want to fuck over the other guys. It sets off a bad relationship and set of relations. If you fuck them over then they fuck the next person over, and that's when the workplace gets shitty. So you want to be smart about the way you do these things.

Through this account, Xin highlights the basic rule of the workers: to have fun and not spoil it for others; this is the backbone of smart work; to not be stupid. As such, being smart becomes a social obligation of workers to respond to the shared, and fundamental insecurities of the working relationship. But also be flexible enough to negotiate the systemic changes from management that

follow the closure of a particular strategy of resistance. This mutual recognition of a shared (smart) response to dominant structures in the workplace challenges the typical neoliberal accounts of the hyper-individualised worker in the 21st century. It suggests that while workers are nevertheless systematically individualised by KPIs and other structures at work that these workers still have recourse to a social consciousness through their shared responsibility to be *smart* about the way they work.

While the ramifications of these findings will be discussed in more detail in the final section of this chapter, it is important to understand the evolution of the term 'smart work' in this section as one which proves necessary to the practice of work for these precarious employees. These workers could not afford to be stupid at work; being smart was a prerequisite for surviving in the job. As Miles puts it, if these workers fail to be smart, they fall into mechanical obsolescence and cease to be valuable to their workplace. The following section will contrast this conceptualisation of smart work against scenarios from the interviews in which workers respond to insecurities and uncertainties in their workplace. I will illustrate how smart work comes to be rationalised, and operationalised in the workplace as a mechanism that secures the connection between these workers and their workplace.

Smart Work as a Political Response to Insecurity

As a necessary practice of precarious workers, smart work offers its workers "feasible and exciting" (Chatterton, 2010, p. 197) alternatives to otherwise mundane work scenarios. Perhaps more specifically, the avenues inspired by smart work encourage workers to take a more active interaction with the limits of work. Whether these limits include talking, joking around, sneaking off, or cutting corners, there is a clear 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) ethic employed by these workers that prioritises a more direct approach to responsibility at work. This ethic suggests that the experience of precarity has urged individuals to create new modes of 'being and community' as Shukaitis (2013) emphasises in chapter three. More to the point, these findings suggest that workers are enabling a form of responsibility that challenges the central organisation of power. By working smart, these workers seek to take control of their work, and share that control amongst themselves, rather than divert it to another source of authority. Such a formation of power, I argue in the following section, reflects an Anarchist credo that "inasmuch as possible, power is to stay with those who must bear its effects" (May, 1994, p. 57). Such a struggle for direct control of power at work suggests that workers are engaged in a political struggle in the workplace.

One problem that was common to almost all of the interviews was the alienating effects of the centralised, impersonal administration. A common source of frustration for many workers

interviewed was that administrators, and sometimes management (although not always) had little understanding of the job on the shopfloor. If there was a problem, it was often the case that taking it through official channels wouldn't result in a solution, and would leave the worker with more paperwork and official responsibilities: instead the solution was usually found in their fellow workers. Consequently workers felt a division between themselves and the managerial discourse and imperatives. When problems arose, workers like Basil (M, 19) — a shop assistant at site 5 — explain that answers come more readily from fellow workers than from management.

> Basil: you don't take questions to the boss unless you're ready for a massive answer/search.
>
> PJ: right, so it's not necessarily because your boss wouldn't be able to help, but that they wouldn't be as efficient?
>
> Basil: yeah, I mean the boss would probably tell you what needs to be done. But if you have someone there with experience they'd tell you *how* to do it. You know how the easiest way to do it is.

Basil was not alone on this point. Other workers, like Rhys (M, 34) who works at site 2, reported having issues when taking problems to management. Rhys recounts how he was called into the manager's office after spending a morning trying to find a case of missing stock.

> …that was the first time I'd been taken to the office and asked [about not hitting the KPIs]. But yeah, they just posed the question 'why' and sort of I had to explain why [I couldn't hit my KPIs that morning]. Although it was all thrown right back into my face. [Managements' response was] "Like this [other] fella here, he's got the same job working in the same section, facing the same problems and he's hitting it [the KPIs], why aren't you?"

Instead, Rhys said the smart way was to just fudge the books and hide the error, which was something he learnt from his colleagues who had been doing it for ages. In a commentary on the ideological resurgence of Anarchism in recent times, Gordon (2007) emphasises the role of direct action as a valuable mode of political engagement. The emergence of direct action, as exemplified by Rhys, suggests a more continuous involvement of social interaction among these precarious workers, which Gordon suggests encourages a greater grassroots ideological expression as individuals become more embedded in a social dialogue (Gordon, 2007, p. 32). This social engagement, Gordon suggests, is transformational because it brings into existence a social reality in the here and now. He says:

> Anarchist modes of interaction — non-hierarchical, voluntary, cooperative, solidaric and playful — are no longer seen as features on which to model a future society, but rather as an ever present potential of the here and now. (Gordon, 2007, p. 46)

The importance of this 'anarchistic' transformational ideal is emphasised here as a direct engagement with non-hierarchical power. This direct engagement with social reality is paramount to Postanarchist theory because it is within this direct intervention with the world that movements become a reality. As Lewis Call (2010, p. 14) comments "Post-anarchism today describes the world we actually live in. It offers innovative, effective strategies for us to understand that world and engage with it". This engagement is reflected in Basil's and Rhys' case by the measure in which they operate beyond the realms of management and take direct control over their organisational processes at work. Most importantly, this direct intervention with responsibility involves a deviant practice through which Rhys and Basil both deviate from official managerial, and/or bureaucratic protocols to create their own vision of a better working environment.

In addition to Rhys above explanation, Luis (M, 27) — the picker from site 2 — explained that despite the centralised administrative protocols, workers on the floor deferred to their local cohorts for organisational knowhow. Luis explains that the best example of this was in the way that workers used things like 'different shorthand on the order forms', or in the manner that workers submitted their work on computer, tablet, or paper forms:

> Luis: Well, it's just different styles. It can all be the same thing, but there's different ways of presenting it. I mean, everyone basically does the same job but there needs to be an overall 'this is how we do it' but every time they (the factory) try to do this the older staff are like 'fuck that we're not doing this' because our way is better
>
> PJ: yeah, because they've been there longer, they already have a system right?
>
> Luis: Yeah. There's people — casuals — that have been there for say ten years man. [It's] Because they're casuals [that they don't care to learn new systems].

The fundamental problem that Luis, Rhys, and Basil identify with their workstation is a collective response to the uncertainties of centralised management. While there are certainly issues of changing knowledge sets of the workers, as well as the continuous employment of casual staff, the response from workers appears to be overwhelmingly the same: to secure their relationship to colleagues and find enjoyment in the experience of working. This *lived experience* of work becomes so vital to these workers because of their limited avenues to reason, and/or communicate

with management. Skyler (F, 30) who works as a shop assistant at site 1 understands this separation of discourse to be one that emerges around causal work:

> … yeah, it's a weird thing. It's not like we're looked down on. Really. It's like the head of the office couldn't give a fuck [about what we do at work]. [But] If our numbers were out they'd fire us in a second. But the floor managers: they're not too bad. But if you drew a line between the managers and the central mangers/state managers, office, accountants etc. They've got job security, so they'd happily burn employees beneath them to keep their job security. And I think that's when you get the really big gaps between management and labour.

For Skyler, a gap emerges, between the salaried and casual workers because of the function of their role at work. She believes the security afforded to salaried workers creates a rift between management and labourers that furthers inequalities like, for instance, the reduction of casual workers to pawns. In the other retail store (site 5), Mena (F, 40)[10] agrees that this disconnect between management and employees exists. However, Mena disagreed with Skyler's view that management is *intentionally* using casual workers for their ends. While Mena had much more respect for her management team, she simply believed management were motivated by a different set of responsibilities to the employees. She believed that it was management's 'cost saving measures' that led management to adopt an inefficient centralised (bureaucratic) system. Mena offers the example from her workplace that arises because of management's centrally order stock system. She explained that this often meant that individual stores had to deal with an excessive back log stock. This backlog led to overcrowding of storerooms and caused "headaches" for the employees who had to locate and store the items during business hours when they were already occupied with customers. This problem often led Mena to busy herself with customer service aspects of her work in an effort to intentionally avoid other responsibilities of her job, like clearing the store room. Such a mechanism was effective for Mena, because if she was with customers she could not be accused of 'not-working', even if she was just having a friendly conversation. This strategy was corroborated by Mena's colleague Damon (M, 38) who agrees that focusing time on conversations with customers was an effective (or s*mart*) way to secure their value to the workplace:

[10] Mena's interview was conducted at her house while she was dealing with her 2 young children and subsequently was not audio-recorded. As such a direct transcript of our conversation and interview is not possible, and the views offered were taken from my handwritten notes during and after the interview.

> …customers can be a really good source of freedom in this job. I feel like those interactions get undervalued — because a few customers are arseholes — but customers can make life a hell of a lot more exciting if you ask the right questions.

Like Mena, Damon agrees that an effective way to avoid undesirable aspects of work was to spend time socialising with customers. Damon also suggests that this social engagement with customers helps to combat the otherwise humdrum encounters that are common to customer service roles. Like Luis, Rhys, Basil, and Skyler, Mena and Damon all arrive at similar responses to their workplace because of certain insecurities about their relationship to work. The threat of monotonous and boring work, alongside the threat of continuous casual employment, and a gap between management and employees plays a conspicuous role in the organisation of workers responses to work. By framing their actions as smart or dumb, these interviews highlight a shared response to work that seeks to challenge, and negotiate these insecurities.

Thus smart work emerges as a form of "imperceptible politics" which Papadopoulos, Stephenson, Tsianos (2008, p. 71) refer to as an everyday cultural and practical" practice of escaping from the insecurities of everyday life. Rather than viewing this 'escape' as a form of retreat or disengagement from the world, these authors suggest that this form of escape instigates an "intensification of committed constructions and efficacious interventions" with the dominant formation of power (Papadopoulos et al. 2008, p. 66). That is, they suggest that:

> The relation between control and escape is one of temporal difference: escape comes first. Unsettled bodies move, they become vagabonds who escape, they leave the stage of forced immobility; power reorganises itself in order to respond to their exit. (Papadopoulos et al. 2008, p. 56)

In a similar vein, the relationship of the smart worker to their workplace should not be considered as a coping mechanism, or a form of decaf resistance (see chapter three) because it exemplifies the manner in which workers mobilise themselves in precarious work. That is to say that smart workers create avenues through which both themselves, and other workers can interact in a manner free from managerial preoccupation. Working smart involves a practical operationalisation of power where workers create pragmatic opportunities with which to secure more meaningful and valuable relationships than those offered by the official mechanisms of management.

The anarchistic contestation of power is valuable for analysis here because it demonstrates the systematic drive from workers to decentralise the power of administrational and managerial prerogatives over the social realm of work. Such a point is emphasised by Postanarchists, like

Newman, because it suspends and delegitimises the institutionalisation of power (2017). This process, Newman argues, renders profane the institutional logic of neoliberal capitalism by marginalising its influence over individual subjectivity.

> [I] have characterised the insurrection as a mode of political action that neither seeks power nor opposes it in any simplistic sense but which, rather, *profanes* it, suspending its operation and fostering instead autonomous relations and forms of subjectivity. (Newman, 2017, p. 294)

This response of smart workers embodies this Postanarchist insurgent power because it arises as a way to combat neoliberal subjectivity without placing ultimate power in the individual subject of self-discipline. That is to say, it draws power from the individual, liberal, worker to create smart avenues of work that can then be reproduced by other workers.

This Postanarchist approach to power shares similarities with that adopted by the smart workers. By organising work around more social aspects, smart workers struggle against the capitalist mode of operations in the workplace. By being smart at work, these employees delegitimise — or render profane — work. This profanation of work is demonstrated through discourses of smart work in this chapter whereby workers argue their 'lack of responsibility' to work makes them less restricted than other workers. In a similar fashion to the Postanarchist opposition of power, so too do these workers oppose the dominant authority of capitalist production at work. Rather than uprising against their workplace in a revolutionary coup, smart workers seek to dismantle the hegemonic power of work over their personal lives. While these workers certainly don't push this Anarchist logic to the extent of destroying the power of work altogether, it is a valuable methodological tool because it highlights the operationalisation of profane work as a method to protect workers from precarity. Moreover, such a method is a valuable tool in an environment in which workers have few other options.

As such, the political implications of smart work need to be recognised here as one that challenges the ability of management to isolate and regulate worker behaviour. While it is true that these workers are, nevertheless, still involved in the capitalistic process of exchanging their labour for a fee in which workplaces reap far greater rewards than the workers, these workers in my research contest the ability of this process to separate them from their experiences at work. To clarify, workers do not challenge the capitalistic nature of their industries, the fact that they are engaged in *work* contradicts this possibility. However, the smart worker is effective at ensuring that this

capitalistic enterprise does not foreclose the possibility of enjoyment for these workers who attempt to secure their life within the (capitalistic) process of working. In the final section of this chapter I will examine the payoff to working smart for these workers as I emphasis the resistant nature of contemporary work itself as a means of securing a political and social livelihood.

The Payoff to Work[ing smart]

A central question motivating this research has been responsibility; namely understanding the responsibilities of individual workers who are subject to insecure employment relationships. Smart work has become a useful and succinct theme that emerged throughout my research that addresses this insecurity of the individual worker. By being smart, these workers embody a specific form of knowledge (i.e. being smart) that obliges and directs their behaviours at work. This approach reorganises responsibility toward a need to secure specific interactions between workers and work that have become marginalised and threatened (e.g. breaks, human interaction). As a result of this, I have presented a case for smart work that is more than just a personal trait. I have presented the concept as one that refers to this shared rationality across the research sites that organises behaviour around a strategic response to insecurity.

The benefits of working smart can be situated as a resistant political practice quite clearly when examining the 'payoff to work'. Towards the end of each interview I asked each worker (i) what the payoff to work is, and (ii) how does work fit into their life. These questions challenged the participants to think about *why* they work — which caught many of them off guard. While "for the money" was often the intuitive response to this question after a bit of reflection the participants began to describe their subordinate positions within the workplace hierarchy work as an 'asset' that allows each worker to exploit the capitalist responsibilities of labour that are commonly associated with the neoliberal colonisation of the private sphere.

One common response that many of the workers shared was about the lack of formal responsibility in their workplaces. A common argument was that this lack of responsibility made work worthwhile. That is to say that by having clear and identifiable duties at work (e.g. quantitative KPIs/quotas), these workers were free from internalising more complex issues in the workplace. For instance, Gareth (M, 24), who works as a shop assistant at site 1, explains the payoff to working at site 1 as one that allows him to relinquish the responsibility (capitalistic) production at work. Instead this workplace allows him a more secure interaction with work because it separated his production of human value from the capitalistic mechanism of production. When asked about the payoff to working, Gareth was adamant that he did not want to 'climb the ladder' and progress in

his workplace. When I asked him why this was he replied that it was the "freedom" that made his work valuable. That is to say, Gareth argued that the restricted organisational responsibility was what made work enjoyable for him and that such a lack of responsibility helped him avoid this conceptualisation of work — as a "portfolio career" — as something that determined the rest of his life. He explains:

> …well a classic example is a lawyer or something, right? You know the law student graduates uni. Goes into a nice high paying job with lots of prestige and stuff. But instead of walking into an 8 hour job, they walk into a 12 hour day. You know, they hit the drugs – this is the stereotype, obviously – but you know they lose their family and lose themselves. It's the same with all these [Hollywood] cop stories where work becomes your life — and it ruins their whole life. You know. And I don't want that I want to be creative in my spare time. Or go home and love myself...haha...I mean, not physically, but you know. I want to be happy with who I am. I want to enjoy my own company. I don't want to ruin my life for some job

At the same site, Skyler (F, 30) agrees with Gareth that the 'payoff' to work is that work allows her a space to live and work without the responsibility of having to play the corporate game. For Skyler the choice to work at site 1 was 'easy'. While the conditions were not ideal, the payoff was far better for her than working in a job where she needs to take institutional responsibility. When asked how worker fits into her "overall life plans" Skyler replied:

> …I don't know. Working here is easy. The pay is not bad. For what it is. Yeah it should be better, but yeah, $23 an hour isn't too bad for easy work. There's no responsibilities, I can play the fool.

At the end of her interview, Skyler said:

> …I don't think there are too many people that work at [site 1] for a career opportunity. We do it because it's easy and you can transfer around. You know, if I wanted to move home [to Melbourne] I could get a transfer. You know. I work here because it's easy not because it's really fun or great for a career.

This reluctance to take the responsibility of career development is not just limited to the younger workers, however. Karl (M, 42) who works on the assembly line at site 3, agrees that work is ideal because it allows him to forgo certain responsibilities that come with working in the 21st century. Again, his response challenges the narrative of the 'portfolio career', and the notion that one's entire life is an investment into labour potential. Like the other interviewees, Karl conceived of work as something that was 'easy'; something that allowed him to focus on life without making

much compromise for work.

> PJ: …Is this something you've thought about as a career job?
>
> Karl: mate, I haven't thought about my career since I was about 12 years old and I wanted to be a fireman.
>
> PJ: right. But you reckon you're happy to do this for the rest of your life? The money is good, yeah?
>
> Karl: yeah about $8-900 a week. Pretty good for easy work. No responsibilities. I still get half the day of light when I get home. Every now and then we get some time to get overseas. I don't really know about a career. I just got this job to pay the bills and I'm still doing it.

Damon (M, 38), a shop assistant at site 5, agrees that the lack of responsibility in these vocations was what made the 'payoff' more enticing. However, Damon adds that this freedom (from institutional responsibility) allows him to focus on the more important parts of his life. Like Karl, Damon agrees that work responsibilities are less valuable than other responsibilities, and that the payoff to work is in finding a job that you are not responsible for.

> PJ: What's the payoff here — what do you like about working at [site 5]? Why do you do it?
>
> Damon: well. It's easy, you know. It's not the greatest job. I'll be the first to admit that. But it's not a bad job. They look after us. We get to work in the air con and play around with cool shit.
>
> PJ: yeah, what about the lifestyle? You know, how does it fit into *your* life.
>
> Damon: well. I don't have to worry about deadlines, or shit like that. I can work my hours and go home — or go party, or play a gig — or whatever. You know, work is — it's flexible — I don't have to work over Christmas or overtime or anything. It's easy work — and that means that my life doesn't have to suffer because of my work. It's a big place too. I've moved stores before and it wasn't too much effort. You know, I can *potentially* [emphasis in original] get a transfer wherever I want — in Australia, anyway. I don't know. I like the balance because work doesn't kill me. I don't know if I can say it any more than that.

Each of these interviews demonstrates a reluctance from workers to take responsibility in the organisation of capital production at work. It demonstrates how workers utilise clear and definable work responsibilities to avoid internalising work responsibility on a more personal level. By celebrating a lack of formal responsibility over the production process these workers distance themselves from the managerial prerogatives of capital at work. This response of workers to place

their responsibilities into social and devious aspects of smart work is an act that seeks not to separate capital from labour, but rather separate capital and labour from life itself, as workers invest more time and attention to this otherwise neglected social realm.

Conclusion

In this chapter I examined the concept of smart work. This began with a more literal demonstration of the manner in which workers discuss 'smart' and 'dumb' behaviour in the interviews. Nevertheless, these interviews highlight smart and dumb behaviours as more than just personal moral judgments; instead smart and dumb become normative values that are based on the shared experience of insecurity by these workers. Put simply, the 'smart' responses praised acts that succeeded in making work easier and more fun for workers without attracting the attention of management, while 'dumb' work made work harder for workers — generally because it exposed these deviant interactions to management.

This conceptualisation of smart work was important because it positions smart work as a more socio-political, rather than personal narrative. It highlights the processes in which workers secure their identity and connection to work through meaningful social interactions. By being smart at work, these workers secure a social element of work that is often stripped from workers in these low-skilled, or unskilled, environments. Smart work's ability to challenge insecurity in these worksites emerges through its emergence in neoliberal narratives as a mechanisms to challenge the reduction of experience and responsibility to individual sources. Instead, smart work challenges this reduction of responsibility by demonstrating the importance of social networks for expanding knowledge, and creating new possibilities of social interactions in otherwise monotonous, repetitive and dominating environments.

Such a view of smart work relies heavily on a Postanarchist interpretation of capitalistic domination that emerges through both material processes of labour, but also the individual internalisation and discipline of labour. Smart work also draws on the traditional importance of direct action, localisation, and anti-authority in Anarchist behaviour. This reliance becomes clear as workers play on the ambiguity of responsibility as it emerges in these centralised, casualised, and hyper-organised worksites. One the one hand the precarious organisation of these worksites strips organisational responsibility from these employees leaving them in a state of insecurity with little bargaining power or sense of purpose. On the other hand, this lack of responsibility allows these workers to enjoy a labour environment that is free from the responsibility of increasing their own human capital. In this vacuum of organisational responsibility, workers show an obligation to more social structures like other workers, family, fun, and hobbies. Rather than view work as the subject

of resistance, then, the smart worker uses work as a tool to secure what is threatened by modern society. What makes smart workers, smart, is their ability to secure a quality of life that is free from the capitalist appropriation of work into life.

As a theme in the research, smart work reflects a power/knowledge framework (see Foucault, 1988) that serves the purpose of liberating workers from work while, seemingly periodically, being at work at the same time. This apparent paradox of liberation, I have argued, arises out of a conflict between capital and life. Workers try to create a process that distinguishes between capital (which is synonymous with labour) and life. This phenomenon might also be viewed as a challenge against the entrepreneurial spirit of late capitalism and flexible work that puts human life as a capital project. In a wider context, smart work highlights the importance of social responsibility as a mechanism of resistance in contemporary, insecure workplaces. It illustrates how workers use the very rules that foster insecurity and precarity (see Chapter Five) in order to create a social responsibility (see Chapter Six) that reorganises the relationship of capital (and work) over life. By privileging behaviours that were on the whole 'devious' and 'fun', workers created a culture in which workers were inducted. This responsibility, combined with the 'payoff to work' highlights a responsibility of the workers to minimise the more capitalistic aspects of work that seek to appropriate individual workers into mere labour power. This capitalistic attribute is rejected by the workers through the embrace of unskilled/low skilled work. Instead of adopting the entrepreneurial spirit that has become popularised, or championed, through flexible work under late capitalisation, these smart workers trade capitalistic responsibility for social responsibility. In this twist of fate, workers choose to subordinate themselves for a clear 7.5 hours a day, rather than subordinate themselves to a career of struggle for capital stability. While this presents a problematic picture of resistance in the contemporary workplace, it nevertheless highlights the importance of local communities in resisting future uncertainty and insecurity as well as demonstrating the ongoing importance of work as an avenue for social research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The emergence and production of neoliberal forms of responsibility by precarious workers presents a fundamental problem to the security of workers around the world. Economic data, presented in Chapter One, identifies significant challenges facing the contemporary Australian worker such as: decreasing unionisation, declining and negative wage growth, increased demands for productivity, and increasing household debt. These economic issues suggest that pressure is mounting on Australian workers and that in order to survive they need to work harder than before for a lesser share of economic reward. On top of this, the data suggest that workers are less likely to be able to access avenues to bargain for more equitable treatment given the decline in union representation.

Although the economic pitfalls of capitalism have been described by theorists in the industrial era, the detrimental effects of capitalism have intensified in recent times. The deterioration of the social experience of work in contemporary times can be explained, amongst other things, by the increasing separation of company profits from employee wages. This wage gap has intensified since the 1970s thanks to a neoliberal shift in which social services (i.e. welfare, housing, public spaces) have become more closely oriented to market economics. This economic shift reflects and intensifies the stratifying effects of capitalism as the separation between the rich and the poor crystallises into social institutions as the effects of class stratification become clear in health, crime, and educational outcomes.

Much research on workplace relations in recent times focuses on the emergence of deviant behaviour by workers who experience this social instability in work. While much of this research points towards an increase in the experience of job insecurity amongst workers, the social effect of deviant behaviour on the experience of job insecurity has, however, been unclear. More to the point, while deviance can be traced into contemporary work practices, its ability to effect change and transform the workplace has been debated.

This thesis addresses this relationship between job insecurity and deviant behaviour. In this thesis I investigated the transformational potential of deviant behaviour across five worksites in order to understand how workers organise themselves around the challenges of insecure and precarious work. Herein I expanded two sub-questions to the research; both to understand what role workers serve in creating responsibilities, as well as whether responsibilities are politically focused, or just personal coping mechanisms.

In order to conceptualise the transformational potential of insecure workers, my thesis draws from the deconstructive methodology of Jacques Derrida (1995). Derrida's conceptualisation of 'responsibility' in his manuscript on 'The Gift of Death' outlining a philosophy of responsibility is valuable to research here because it situates subjectivity as part of an *active* interaction with a social world. This conceptualisation of responsibility deconstructs the individual subject by examining its' relationships — or obligations/responsibilities — to others. Such an approach is valuable to the research questions within this thesis because it illuminates the social cultivation of identity, value and meaning as individual subjects formulate experiences and meaning through their obligations and responsibilities to the world around them. More importantly, this approach to subjectivity both draws from, but is inherently resistant and critical of the atomised liberal notion of subjectivity and thus offers a great critical approach to neoliberal conceptualisations of subjectivity that coincide with empirical projects that focus too intently on individual misbehaviour in the workplace.

Instead, Derrida's conceptualisation of responsibility offers a more political and social (rather than individual) understanding of subjectivity. This conceptualisation, Newman argues, implies a radical political theory in which responsibility deconstructs and criticises the power relations inherent in subjects by "unmasking the conceptual hierarchies, binary oppositions and aporias in philosophy" (Newman, 2010, p. 5). Newman argues that this radical political capacity of Derridean thought rivals that of Anarchist political theory because this process of deconstruction makes subjects aware of their "latent metaphysical structure, and therefore" their "own potential for domination" (2001, p. 6). While this focus on domination, as I explain in Chapter One, has always been central to Anarchist theory it has become more important in contemporary times as theorists utilise a poststructuralist lens to understand more covert forms of domination that arise through colonialism, racism, sexism etc. I utilise Newman's Postanarchist analysis of Derrida as a framework in which to examine the role of hierarchy and authority that structure the organisational responses of insecure workers. Through the analysis of workers' ability-to-respond (i.e. *responsibility*) to structures of power, I examine the mechanisms that organise workers, and their experiences of subjectivity.

In Chapter Five the key mechanisms that organise workers were identified to involved (i) employee contracts (ii) time considerations, which were largely organised around (iii) KPIs and (iv) social interactions and the desire to increase human interaction at work. Through these mechanisms I explored worker responses, and demonstrated how workers challenge various structures-of-power by testing the limits of possible behaviour at work. Here I demonstrate how workers use the authority afforded them from structures of power to justify cutting corners, the limitation of production, and increasing social interactions in a more pragmatic scale as workers 'game the system'. I examine the political and transformational potential of these behaviours more closely in

Chapter Six where I explore two competing approaches to 'deviant' responsibility. I criticise the first conceptualisation of responsibility as a form of 'false consciousness' (Žižek, 1989) in which workers believe they are disassociating themselves from work, despite the fact that they continue to perform the labour tasks that are required of them (see also McCabe, 2007; Contu, 2008; Korczynski, 2011; Paulsen, 2015). I contrast this 'passive' form of responsibility to a more 'active' form in the second part of the chapter by demonstrating the way workers deviate from standard training, and managerial authority. Here I use Derrida's conceptualisation of responsibility to demonstrate how workers use various forms of bureaucratic authority to contradict managerial authority and, in the space of contradiction that emerges, create new forms of non-determined responsibility in which workers could organise themselves around principles of mutual benefit.

In Chapter Seven I conceptualised these political strategies of workers through the theme of 'smart work'. This thematic organisation of workers around 'smart' behaviour at work helps to highlight the epistemological schema through which workers come to know and discipline their behaviour at work. That is to say that smart work reflects a logical process that organises worker behaviour; this process is not individualised, but rather it draws from a social schema that is learnt (and explicitly taught to workers in Chapter Six) from interactions through the workplace. Smart work is central to this thesis because it demonstrates a shared political commitment from workers to challenge the organisation of power in the workplace. Moreover, I argue that through 'being smart at work' workers display an Anarchist commitment to challenging domination through the adoption of direct interventions with power and authority at work. By behaving in a 'smart' fashion, workers contest the appropriation of work and its domination over social life. Moreover, this contestation of work emerges through collective means, rather than individual means; workers learn what is possible and what is beneficial through the experience of their peers. They learn how to behave through local knowledge that is taught direct to workers from peers and colleagues throughout their interactions at work.

Such a process of direct political engagement with the workplace exemplifies strong anarchistic themes in these findings. It is anarchistic in the sense that authority of knowledge (that is, 'being smart') is a process that is continuously contested and always under flux; there is no one 'true' way to 'be smart' at work, rather, being smart involves this Anarchist philosophy of a continuous struggle against domination through which workers strive to make life better for each other. While workers in my research do not contest the dominating nature of (capitalist) work, nor do they contest the necessity of 'work' as a social institution, they nevertheless, use work as a tool they can manipulate to make social life more secure from the very real threat of a neoliberal deterioration in public services, as well as increasing household debt, increasing productivity, decreasing

unionisation. The ramifications, and significance of this conclusion will be critically discussed in this final chapter of the thesis.

How do Workers Respond to Insecurity at Work?

The main research question in this thesis has been to understand how workers respond to insecurity (or precarity) at work. More specifically, in Chapter One I asked: What are the mechanisms that allow workers to respond to, and organise themselves around the challenges of insecure and precarious work? This question serves as a focal point around which two secondary questions revolve. Both (i) how are workers involved in the production of responsibility, and (ii) how do these responsibilities resist domination? The theme of smart work answers each of these questions by highlighting the mechanisms through which workers collectively organise themselves around principles and strategies to minimise the insecure and alienating effects of work.

In contrast to concerns about a 'decaf resistance' (Contu, 2008) that emerges through individualised responses to work, my findings suggest that workers deliberately, and collectively, deviate from and challenge aspects of work that alienate, isolate and render workers insecure. More specifically, smart work demonstrates the manner in which workers struggle against the features of contemporary work that are more likely to separate workers and encourage workers to work in competition with one another. While such findings, as I will detail later in this chapter, likely reflect the type of worksites used in this research the findings nevertheless serve as a valuable contribution to the investigation of the transformational potential of deviance. More specifically, my findings suggest that despite the highly individualised, casualised, and independent nature of work that workers do still, nevertheless, support each other — albeit through an individualised fashion.

This interpersonal engagement between workers suggests a more political, rather than personal engagement with precarious work because it demonstrates the processes in which workers secure their identity and connection to work by interacting with other workers. It is political, then, because it involves intersubjective interactions. This intersubjectivity shapes the mechanisms and dynamics of power at work as workers begin to organise themselves around more ideal processes that encourage social activity in these otherwise precarious working environments. By being 'smart' and carefully engaging in social activities these workers are successful at shaping the reality of not just their experience of work, but also others in the workplace. This environment is cultivated through the manner in which workers can contest management, and create new possibilities for interactions with other workers that emerge in between managerial and bureaucratic authority.

While smart work demonstrates the mutual endeavours of workers to shape their workplace it is important to recognise the concerns of theorists who emphasise, as Korczynski does, that this

deviant behaviour "required the labour process to be functioning" (2011, p. 1431). In each instance of smart work throughout the research, smart work operates only in conjunction with the labour process; without the (capitalistic) engagement of work, smart work could not exist. While the reliance of smart work on capitalist work is important, it misses the monumental point of resistance in these struggles. Namely that smart work serves to illuminate the practical conditions of resistance that are created by workers who have no other option to work — other than working *smart.* Scott (1990, p. 200) refers to this political assemblage as one that is always "pressing, testing, probing the boundaries of the permissible". Through this assemblage, Scott argues that an "infrapolitics of the powerless" (Scott, 1990, p. xiii) is created in which individuals struggle against the realities of power. He argues that such a struggle ought to be considered political, rather than relegated to a personal coping mechanism:

> One might argue perhaps that even such practical resistance, like the discourse it reflects and that sustains it, amounts to nothing more than trivial coping mechanisms that cannot materially affect the overall situation of domination…at one level this is perfectly true but irrelevant since our point is that these are the forms that political struggle takes when frontal assaults are precluded by the realities of power. (Scott, 1990, p. 191)

Such struggles, Scott argues forge a consciousness that is apparent in the theme of smart work in this research where workers demonstrate a public awareness of the perils of their workplace. Thus, by signifying the epistemological organisation of worker strategies smart work can be seen to arise out of a more mutual struggle for self-autonomy than the individualistic means often described in previous empirical work. Such a struggle is an anarchistic one because the logic of smart work urges workers to take direct control over their behaviour at work. Moreover, these anarchistic themes emerge through the manner in which smart workers draw from, and privilege local workers and their skillsets and experiences over the more hierarchical authority of management. By 'cutting corners' on paperwork, gaming KPIs, finding/creating free time, and even (occasionally) refusing to follow management directives smart workers embody an Anarchist ethos. This ethos leads smart workers to create a more dignified and meaningful social connection to their work through mutual agreements between colleagues in the workplace that are continually developing and readjusting to the demands of management. Herein they resist insecurities of work that would serve to further dominate workers by atomising them and isolating them from these social elements of work.

Smart work and its Contribution to the Research

The findings presented in this thesis, particularly the theme of smart work, promises to offer a significant contribution to many fields of research involved in the organisation of work, social

theory, and more generally the sociology of work. Paramount to this contribution is evidence in favour of the centrality of work, despite the corrosive effects of the precarious workplace. As Deranty (2015) argues, the experience of work provides important social bonds, as well as focal points for the "organization of movements against domination" (p. 119). Such claims can be contrasted to theorists like Granter (2009) who are critical of the ability of work to provide a vital sociological lens with which to understand future society. Granter (2009) argues that the evolution of work has led itself to an end where work is disappearing (both in the sense that underemployment is rising, but also in the sense that work is no longer socially valuable in its capitalistic form). While I agree that the process of 'work' needs to be readapted to fit social needs of a 21st century, my research demonstrates that the narrative that work is no longer satisfying social needs is overstated. On the contrary, workers interviewed relied on work to *survive;* both economically, and socially. If anything, the often monotonous nature of unskilled work that was presented in this research serves to secure workers who were unsure about a career trajectory. While technological advances (namely robotics and artificial intelligence) threaten the stability of these workplaces, it would be sociologically irresponsible to overlook the significance of social encounters, experiences, and challenges that are associated with work *today*. Subsequently, the findings in this research resonates with arguments by Deranty (2015) and Honneth (2012) who suggest that work continues to offer valuable sociological insight into the organisation of citizens in our globalised world. While precarity exists for workers in this research, the experience of — and struggle against — these insecurities is a valuable and worthwhile experience; both for the workers, but also for our sociological understanding of work. To engage in a utopian project to think of 'work without capitalism' is one thing, to ignore the social effects of work *with* capitalism — especially in its current late capitalistic form — would be to ignore the very fabric that creates society today.

Second, a fundamental contribution of this thesis emerges through the realisation of deviance in the workplace. More specifically, the contribution here arises where being smart at work *necessitates* deviant activity. Without smart work, workers in my research would be far more precarious and insecure. Without smart work, these workers would be isolated and estranged, and thus, smart work serves a vital role in the organisation of the workplace. The future of research into work needs to more carefully adapt ideas of deviance and resistance into conceptualisations of management, social theory, and industrial relations. While literature on 'work' often lends itself to conceptualisations of deviant behaviours (see Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999), my research suggests that an element of deviousness is *integral* to understanding not just the organisational experience of work, but also the political effects on identity, and society.

In agreement with Shukaitis' (2013) analysis of precarious work in Chapter Three the relationship between precarious work, and deviant workers offers much for future analysis as workers begin to experiment "with modes of being and community" in response to precarious labour. My research reflects Shukaitis (2013, p. 642) concerns that a more sociological and empirical focus on precarity can illuminate the productive measures as well as risks of precarity for these workers. Similarly, while my research emphasises the mutual struggles of workers as they formulate ideas of smart approaches to work, these experiences nevertheless fall to the responsibility of individuals. As such, smart work exemplifies a productive yet risky, social method that offers both risk and reward to its users who rely heavily on unorganised spaces in lieu of more unionised or legal struggles.

Third, the findings of smart work emphasise the value of Anarchist theory and methodology in sociological analysis. As Shantz (2014) points out, there are examples of Anarchist theory and Anarchist methodology being used already in the social sciences. Blumenfeld, Bottici, and Critchley (2013) are also vocal in their call for an 'anarchist turn' in recent academic literature that is "shaping our thinking of the political" (p. 2). Central to their argument is that

> Anarchism is not so much a grand unified theory of revolution based on a socio-economic metaphysics and a philosophy of history, as a moral conviction, an ethical disposition that finds expression in practice and as practice. Anarchism is a different way of conceiving and enacting social relations between people, where they are not defined by the authority of the state, the law and the police, but by free agreement between them. (Blumenfeld, Bottici, & Critchley, 2013, p. 4)

Such a view is strongly reflected in the interactions of smart workers who engage in social relations in a space that attempts to be free from the authority of the capitalistic organisation around them. In Chapter Three I cite the work of Graeber (2011), Scott (1990), and Amster (2008) all of whom employ Anarchist methodologies in their research. So too, do I hope to place smart work on this Anarchist continuum in social research. Paramount to my Postanarchist emphasis is the demonstration of a social space that is created within the wider capitalistic enterprise. Holloway (2010) extended a similar theoretical argument where "crack capitalism" was presented as a "fight from the particular" or a "fight from where we are, here and now" to "create spaces or moments of otherness, spaces or moments that walk in the opposite direction, that do not fit in" (p, 261). Likewise smart work reflects this focus, but from a more empirical perspective. The findings about smart work paint a very real struggle that exists within these precarious workplaces. This struggle reflects what some have called a DIY form of politics (Chatterton, 2010) that illustrates how workers seek to take direct control over their organisational process in the hope of resisting forms of

domination that are evident in their workplace. This resistance to domination, I have argued in Chapter One, is essential to both Anarchist and Postanarchist theory (cf. Kropotkin, 1910; Ward, 1996; Gordon, 2007; Newman; 2016) that both share the vision of achieving a more dignifying and free society. Similarly, smart work represents a struggle in which workers try to secure themselves in their workplace by finding a greater and more dignifying purpose to work. It highlights a process of resistance in which workers seek to create more secure connections to the social institution of work by enacting social avenues that are rapidly disappearing in these workplaces.

The fourth and final point I would like to make is the contribution of this research to future trade union activity. While this research offers an account of smart work through largely decentralised interactions and responses to precarious work, it by no means excludes the future involvement and role of unions in the workplace. This research is in no way critical of the fundamental role that trade unions have played in securing better rights and security for workers over the generations. Union activity has been particularly valuable to the formation of the Australian lifestyle (see Chapter Two), and this research does not attempt to marginalise its ability to shape contemporary and future Australian society. Instead, I hope this research serves to highlight the importance of social, as well as financial security for workers who feel otherwise lost in the precarious nature of warehouse and retail work. The findings from 'smart work' demonstrate that workers still do draw from collective ideas and strategies to make work better, and I believe that by understanding these mechanisms of 'smart work' unions can help workers organise themselves more effectively by offering the legal and social resources necessary to strengthen these struggles. While unions currently play an important role by contesting the legal sphere of work, creating governmental regulations over work conditions and are heavily involved in the enterprise bargaining phase of industrial agreements, this research demonstrates where unions can engage workers on a more grassroots level. These strategies also suggest ways to help engage non-traditional workers, such as the un/low-skilled precarious workers who are the subject of this thesis. The findings of smart work illustrate important possibilities for workers in these sites, and if utilised by union members these practices may form useful tools in which to more effectively organise precarious workers and engage the organisations that employ them. Anarchism and unionisation share much history in their struggles against capitalism; there is no reason why they should not also share a future.

Limitations and Future Research

The guiding methodology for this research emerges from a theoretical project that, I argue, has been long in the making. Anarchist, and particularly Postanarchist, theory paints a clear picture about the issues of capitalism, and particularly liberal (i.e. 18th century) and late capitalist formations of dominating power. Nevertheless, this empirical application of Postanarchist framework to empirical

research is relatively new. In this sense, much of this research has been exploratory, and was limited to specific field sites that could guarantee quantified work quotas that could be used to neatly contrast work-responsibilities from other (non-work) responsibilities. Nevertheless, a rapidly emerging facet of precarious work emerges in scenarios that blur the boundaries between work and non-work; specifically with regards to the entrepreneurial employee who is often referred to by human capital theorists (Fleming, 2017). While my research demonstrates a rejection of this use of 'human capital' by workers in my findings, such an avenue warrants a more in depth analysis — especially from an Anarchist, or Postanarchist analysis of self-discipline.

In a similar vein, my research project sets forth a conceptual framework that would likewise benefit from wider application and examination. Like all research it should be applied to a great and wider variety of workplaces and scenarios. A particular focus ought to examine the effects of smart work on skillsets; specifically with reference to the individual reliance on skillsets and its ability to shape the possibilities of individual responses to precarity. Here specifically I hope to stimulate future research by providing this thesis as a model in which to implement research in more skilled worksites that offer workers more discretion over their responsibilities. While it was essential in this research to focus on un/low-skilled employment to clearly delineate between work and non-work responsibilities, the strength of this framework should allow more exploratory adaption in fields like 'gig work', more complex service sectors, and even management where — I am positive — 'smart work' still exists and is still essential to the survival of these workers. As Flyvbjerg points out, the findings from this case study produce a form of rule-based knowledge with which to apply to future research in the field (2006, p. 221). "The most important precondition for science", Flyvbjerg continues, "is that researchers possess a wide range of practical skills for carrying out scientific work" (2006, p. 226). Just as smart work offers a crucial form of contextual knowledge for un/low-skilled workers in my research, so too should it serve to strengthen future research into contemporary work. So too do these findings produce valuable knowledge for future researchers looking at workplaces with more diverse skillsets, gender, and ethnicities.

The findings from the research also pave the way for future research into class consciousness, and social theories of class. While there has been much debate over the class status of what Standing (2010) calls 'the Precariat' (see Olin-Wright, 2016; Jonna & Foster, 2016) my findings suggest that there may well be some form of 'material interests' or 'unity of interests' — to use Olin-Wright's 2016 terminology — that distinguish smart workers from other classes of workers. If these differences can be said to exist, then it is up to future research to demonstrate how these anarchistic performances of cooperation, mutual benefit and direct action can hope to transform future society in a way that is different to other performances of 'class'. Given the breadth, necessity, and spirit of

Anarchist scholars, activists, and — of course — *smart workers* I have little doubt that such questions will go unanswered for long.

Final Thoughts

Since the earliest days of the Industrial Revolution, the continuous conflation of capitalism and labour has been criticised (Marx, 1932; Kropotkin, 1910; Proudhon, 1970). While these criticisms are useful in understanding the effects of labour and work over life and social practices more generally, it is important to recognise that the social institution of work nonetheless persists as an essential feature of society. Sentiments of insecurity, and precarity exist across an ever increasing dynamic of workers in the 21st century; insecure work is no longer associated with unskilled labour in manufacturing sectors, it also extends into service sectors, health, finance, information technology and universities alike. Nevertheless, this research confirms that the effects of job insecurity are not all 'one-way'. The everyday struggle of workers in these precarious relationships needs to be understood to play an important role in minimising the effects of insecurity to make work, and vicariously life, more secure and more desirable.

The findings in my thesis contribute to an important debate about the role of individual worker agency. There has been considerable concern about the ability of individual workers to engage in this power-struggle with workplaces whose power is growing considerably under contemporary late capitalist society. While I agree that these concerns are well grounded, my findings identify a more positive and constructive future for workers. The findings suggest that a more secure and equitable future for workers lies in practices that are already being operationalised everyday by workers, but which have been too often marginalised in research. Smart work serves as the fundamental theme of this research because it demonstrates this collective capacity of groups of workers who are often perceived to be atomised, and alienated in their jobs. As a theme it transcended all field sites, and proved to be not just valuable but *vital* to the survival of workers in these precarious environments. 'Working smart' was essential to both creating 'free time' from production quotas to socialise, as well as being valuable to certain workers to help meet an otherwise ambitious hourly quotas and help the worker avoid being chastised by management. Here smart work demonstrates how workers draw from collective experience, knowledge, and practices to organise themselves around a theme of *mutual cooperation.*

Themes of mutual cooperation, and mutual self-organisation have been central to Anarchist theory since Proudhon criticised the capitalistic organisation of social life in 1840 by declaring that "in society all wages are equal" (1970). While it is not surprising that this statement has been taken quite literally by proponents for UBI in contemporary times, Proudhon's wish was to criticise the

separation of humans in society by any means possible. This desire for equality feeds the Anarchist utopian vision for a good and fair society. Kropotkin, for instance, argued that mutual aid and cooperation were not just important, but have been, and will always be the tools to guide a better society:

> …man [sic] is appealed to, to be guided in his acts, not merely by love, which is always personal, or at the best tribal, but by the perception of his oneness with each human being. In the practice of mutual aid, which we can retrace to the earliest beginnings of evolution, we thus find the positive and undoubted origin of our ethical conceptions; and we can affirm that in the ethical progress of man [sic], mutual support not mutual struggle — has had the leading part. In its wide extension, even at the present time, we also see the best guarantee of a still loftier evolution of our race. (Kropotkin, 1902)

This theory of mutual aid has been conceptualised through the role of direct, interpersonal relationships in recent times by Anarchist theorists like Cindy Milstein (2010) who argue that direct action is vital to "shedding light on the nearly unknown workings of international trade and supranational governance bodies" (p. 109).

> The beauty of the direct action movement, it could be said, is that it strives to take its own ideals to heart. In doing so, it has perhaps unwittingly created the demand for such directly democratic practices on a permanent basis. (Milstein, 2010, p. 112)

In a similar fashion smart work demonstrates a democratic ability of workers to organise themselves around a principle of mutual benefit and cooperation. Smart work, thanks to a Derridean analysis, can be seen as a political process in this thesis because it relies on active, rather than passive workers (as we have seen in Chapter Six). Through this active *response-ability* workers demonstrate the political aspect of smart work by interacting with, and exploring the limits and possibilities of various authoritative structures in the workplace. Such activity requires smart workers to be flexible in the manner in which they draw from pockets of ambiguity, grey areas, and contradictions that emerge in the limits of managerial and bureaucratic authority. Moreover, smart work is useful for this research because it demonstrates how workers respond to the estranging and alienating features of job insecurity by directly challenging structures of power, and often using those very same structures against other forms of power.

Smart work is presented here as a valuable tool for future research and researchers who are interested in understanding the social structure of work, workers and working relationships, but also to those interested in understanding the realm of agency, power, and resistance in the 21st century. Smart work demonstrates how workers deviate from aspects of work in order to resist overarching

experiences of insecurity by securing local relationships in the work environment. Smart work — more than other explanations of deviance — illustrates a more collective organisational process of workers that is useful for situating subjectivity in these precarious environments. It highlights epistemic similarities between workers who share ideas and strategies to help each other survive in the workplace. These findings agree with Doogan's (2009) thesis that "weaknesses on the side of labour are not structural but ideological" (p. 214) by showing how workers actively engage with the structure of work and how workers' responses help to reorganise and secure certain aspects of work. Smart work is valuable here because it demonstrates a transformational aspect in which workers actively, and collectively, challenge and *resist* processes of precarity and insecurity in their working environment. The challenge that faces future research is how to tap into this anarchistic spirit and help insecure workers better organise this resistant capacity to create a more secure and better society for everyone.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Question Sheet

Workplace Response-ability: reproductions of power at work.

Aim: to investigate the way workers organise themselves in workplaces. To what extent do individual responsibilities/practices shape workplace practices?

Key themes:

- What are the structures that make work, *work?*
- What are the powerful mechanisms of work? How do you 'get things done'?
- What authorises things? Who/what is the authority?

Questions:

1. How long have you been at this workplace?
2. Are you on a contract, or a casual basis?
3. Can you describe your job/role in the workplace?
    a. What should you contractually be doing?
    b. What do you *actually* (have to) do?
4. Do you collaborate with others at work? Do you work alone?
    a. Are you allowed to collaborate?
5. Do you have daily duties/quota at work?
    a. Have you ever not completed them?
    b. What happens if you can't get them done?
    c. Do you get help if you can't get it done?
6. Where does work start & finish? Do you take responsibilities home with you?
7. What is your relationship to your boss(es)?
    a. Do they (?) figure heavily in your day, or are they more of a figure head?
    b. Is there a gap between management and labour?
8. If you were the boss would you change anything in the workplace? The structures or organisation?
    a. Would you ever *want* to be the boss?
    b. Do you think promotion is possible?
9. How is your work/life balance?
    a. How does your job figure into the bigger picture of your life?
    b. What is the payoff to work? What do you get from going into work on a daily basis?

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

School of Social Science
Anthropology, Archaeology, Criminology & Sociology

Participant Information Sheet

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

Organisational Responsibility: localised networks of power in the modern workplace

Reason for Research:

This research seeks to examine the role of social relationships at work and in the wider community in producing productive and happy workers.

Project Description:

Throughout 2015, PJ Holtum, a PhD student at the University of Queensland will be conducting short interviews (approx. 40 minutes) with employees from various worksites around Australia. The interviews will be in the form of a conversation and will discuss employee motivations at work and their responsibilities in the workplace. The questions will be about your personal approach to work and how you deal with daily work activities.

Benefits of the research:

This project aims to understand how family, social networks and society - in general – influences attitudes to work. The study will contribute to our understanding of how workers relate to their workplace and publications from the study will influence government and business approaches to employee relations. The results of this study will also contribute to PJ's doctoral thesis at UQ.

Confidentiality of Information:

All the information gathered in the project is confidential. The University of Queensland by law must protect your privacy and maintain the confidentiality of the information we collect for this project. Unless you specifically agree to be identified as part of our research, we will assume that your data is confidential and all details that might identify you will be removed from our interview notes and records.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in the research is voluntary. That means you don't have to answer any question and can stop the interview at any time for any reason. If you ask us to stop, we will destroy all records of the interview. In recognition of the time you are investing into this interview, you will be offered $20 cash. If you chose to withdraw from the project during the interview you will still receive the cash imbursement for your time.

Feedback to Participants:

If you would like feedback once we have completed the project please tell PJ, who can arrange for a project summary to be sent to you.

Further Questions:

This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland. You are free to discuss your participation in this study with project staff (see below). If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, please contact Dr Robin Fitzgerald, the Ethics Officer on (07) 3365 2287.

Research Team

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Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

School of Social Science
Anthropology, Archaeology, Criminology & Sociology

Participant Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

Organisational Responsibility: localised networks of power in the modern workplace

Investigators:
Mr Peter (PJ) Holtum, PhD Candidate, School of Social Science, the University of Queensland

I have read, and I understand, the Participant Information Sheet. I freely agree to participate in this interview according to the conditions in the Participant Information Sheet.

I understand that I will receive a cash reimbursement of $20 in recognition of my time invested into this interview process.

I have received a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form to keep.

I agree/do not agree to my interview being audio recorded.

I understand that the audio version of this interview will be transcribed and coded by the principle investigator only, and will be deleted once it has been coded and de-identified. I understand that the researcher will not reveal my identity or personal details if any information about this project is published or presented in any public form.

I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the study without penalty.

This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland. You are free to discuss your participation in this study with project staff (see below). If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, please contact Dr Robin Fitzgerald, the Ethics Officer on (07) 3365 2287.

Participant's Name (printed) .....

Signature ..... Date .....

Declaration by researcher: I have given a verbal explanation of the research project, its procedures and risks, and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Researcher's Name (printed) .....

Signature ..... Date .....

Mr Peter (PJ) Holtum
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Appendix 4: Ethics Approval Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

School of Social Science
Anthropology, Archaeology, Criminology & Sociology

Dr Patricia Short
Acting Head of School

3 November, 2014

Peter (PJ) Holtum
C/- School of Social Science
The University of Queensland
St Lucia QLD 4072

Dear PJ,

Title: Organisational Responsibility: localised networks of power in the modern workplace.

The School of Social Science Ethical Review Panel (SSERP) has considered your application for ethical clearance to conduct the above project, and I am pleased to advise you that approval has been granted under the clearance number [RHD8/2014].

Please remember to advise the committee if you wish to make an amendment to your approved proposal, by submitting an 'Amendments to Approved Proposals' form. Please also quote the above ethical clearance number in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Robin Fitzgerald
Chair, Social Science Ethical Review Panel.

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